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A NOVEL

BY

HENRY KINGSLEY

AUTHOR OF 'THE HILLYARS AND THE BURTONS,' ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

THE HOUSE OF RHYADER AND FESTINIOG.

THE two sons of the old house of Rhyader developed singularly different dispositions, though both gave great cause of anxiety to their father, at one time. Scarcely divided by one year in age, they were as distant as the poles, both in pursuits and in character. Gervase the elder began life as a solemn and pensive baby, who at his christening attended cautiously to the ceremony, as if to see that it was correctly done in every particular. Shortly afterwards he became a precocious boy and wrote some admirable poetry. Not long afterwards he became a precocious young man, with all the learning of the Egyptians at his fingers' ends. He was a young gentleman of great promise, and although his performances never came up to his promises, he was an all too excellent

young gentleman. His inexorable virtues led him at one time it was suspected Romewards, but he never went; he never did anything incautious.

Iltyd, the younger son, was, on the other hand, a violent baby, a violent and, as some said, a stupid boy, and a most headstrong young man. The mother died not long after Iltyd had attained his tenth year, leaving the head of the house a widower; and after that event no one could do anything with the younger son, save his father and his brother. To these two people, and to these alone (save possibly the colonel of his regiment when he chose), would he listen. The father and brother, who were both crazy about their pedigree, were proud of him. The father would say: 'He is a real De Barri, the inexorable spirit of Giraldus Cambrensis is alive in *him;*' and the brother would say, 'It is true; he may do us honour in war; it is a pity we ever took the name of Arnaud, and allowed the Irish Barrys to usurp our real honours.'

Iltyd Gerald Baldwin Arnaud, christened carefully after the Saint, the Archdeacon and the Archbishop, cast the traditions of his family to the winds, and voted Giraldus Cambrensis the greatest bore of all the Barris. The great Rhys he pronounced to be a noodle, inasmueh as he could not

keep his own kingdom; and he very much affected the company of one Halfacre a groom, who, he declared, was a descendant of Halfager, and consequently a prince in disguise. Iltyd was sent into the army very young, and was a most excellent young officer, though he got into early trouble by incontinence of speech. The colonel of his regiment having incautiously remarked that his family had come over with the Conqueror, Iltyd said, 'You pack of rascals were a little too late, we came over with the FitzGeralds in the time of Edward the Confessor.' He was a foolish young man, and was rebuked most properly. He would laugh at his own pedigree, but only in his own family.

As the brothers Gervase and Iltyd grew to manhood, one seemed to give to the other what was wanted by each. Gervase over-read himself, and pushed his religion to the verge of extreme asceticism; Iltyd, on the other hand, would come home on leave from his regiment and tear Gervase from his study, carrying him over hill, moor, and torrent, up to some nook among the wild Welsh mountains, where they could hear no sound save the distant trickling of waters. Then Iltyd would tell Gervase all about the strange magnificence of London and Paris: and how he, whose short curls were now lying on his brother's shoulder, had yesterday been at court; and how the pale man

that he had been trying to describe was the Emperor, and the boy was the Prince of Wales, and so on; trying to fix the colours and forms of a kaleidoscope to suit the eye of his brother, to whom, at this time, all these people were mere names.

Then they would wander down to the old priory in the hollow, so dearly beloved by the greatest of their family, and among the shattered Norman and early English arches, Gervase would talk about the crusade preached by Giraldus Cambrensis and Baldwin in that spot, until Iltyd would catch his enthusiasm, and believe that the campaign which was now imminent was, in reality, another crusade to snatch the holy places from the hands of an alien and, in reality, barbarous power. Then they would go back to the castle, and their father would say, as he saw them coming home arm in arm, 'nothing will separate those two, *except a woman.*'

The war came, blazed up, burnt low, blazed up again, and then died out. Iltyd was all through it and behaved with credit and distinction: he came home a captain, but, being in the Guards, with, of course, the title of colonel. But meanwhile something had happened to the branch of the Barri family which had never been calculated on for a moment.

The head of the Festiniog family lost his eldest

son by typhoid fever, and before he had time to reflect on the matter, news came that his last surviving son was killed in the trenches. The head of the Rhyaders, the father of our two young gentlemen, at once went to give such consolation to his cousin as he could; and he urged him strongly to marry again. The old man, with the obstinacy of the Rhys family crossed through endless generations with that of the De Barris, had a will of his own. He said that the hand of God was in it, that the Festiniog estates must join those of Rhyader, and that the latter house had two noble sons to represent the allied families. Instead of marrying, he made his will, and by no means too soon, for he died very shortly afterwards, leaving, out of his personal property, seven thousand pounds to Iltyd, as a memorial of his gallantry in war.

The Rhyaders therefore from being merely as the Irish say 'decent' people, that is to say very rich, became immensely so. Rhyader took the title of Festiniog, and became a pillar of the State.

The Romish tendencies of Gervase, the elder of the two sons, gave the most dreadful trouble to his father. The entailed estates of the two branches of the family would most certainly come to Gervase.

Gervase (as was said by his friends) was actually

thinking of joining the Roman priesthood, and openly talking about it. Had he done so, a large part of the vast revenues which had come to the Rhyader branch of the family would flow into the coffers of the Papacy. Llanavon would be restored, and monks would walk about among the violent Welsh dissenters to be stoned: to the new Lord Festiniog such a state of things appeared most horrible, for he was one of the most extreme of all Protestants. Yet he was afraid of his son, and he did not know what to do. He, in the end, had to do nothing at all; affairs arranged themselves for him. Gervase with his new honours fresh upon him went to a ball at Powys Castle, to look, they said, for the last time, on the frivolities of this wicked world. Like many holy men, including Richelieu, he was an admirable dancer, and he danced that night so often with only one young lady, that the county raised their eyebrows, and listened to such of the conversation as they could hear, between the Festiniog heir and Miss Ormerod, as hard as they could. In the interval of the dances they seemed to talk about nothing but religious matters, and the noise went abroad that Miss Ormerod was going to take the veil when Gervase took the cowl.

Such was by no means the fact. Gervase had fallen in love with Alice Ormerod, the moment he

saw her. She was so exceedingly beautiful and charming that there would have been no wonder in the matter at all, had it not been put about that Gervase had not only devoted his life to the secular Roman priesthood but even to the regular; the reality being that he was nothing more than a very high churchman for those times, and had a peculiar and very strong antipathy to the Papacy.

Miss Ormerod held similar views, and to the great delight of her father-in-law very soon became the wife of Gervase.

Twelve months had not passed before she had an heir to the combined estates of Festiniog and Rhyader; but twelve months more had not passed before she was a hopeless, childless cripple, and active life was over for her in this world. Driving down one of the mountainous lanes near Llanavon, the pony took fright and became unmanageable. The nurse and child were thrown against a stone wall and killed; and Lady Rhyader, after trembling for a year between this world and the next, became an apparently hopeless invalid.

If Gervase had loved her before, he adored her now. The year during which he had dreaded to lose her had only rendered her more precious. The eight years which followed on that year had rendered her more precious still. Gervase Arnaud thought that he had made his mind up on every

subject save one; and on that one point he could get no information whatever. His wife and he had every thought, every sentiment, every hope in common; but he wanted to know if there was any chance of their meeting after death. Rome said no, save under certain conditions, to which he would not submit. The Anglicans said, very properly, that they could not tell him. Neither the Irvingites nor the Swedenborgians satisfied him. A keen, shrewd man enough in most things, he had cast his lot in with one woman, and made himself foolish about her. The High Church people declined most properly to tell him more than they knew, and he went elsewhere. The last people he tried were the Moravians; they told him that if he thought so much of his wife he was unfit for bliss. In short, he could get no satisfaction at all on the subject of his meeting his wife in a future state. Spiritualism was not then, or he might have taken to *that.* After eight years it would have taken a Mosheim to say of what heresy he was innocent.

Possibly of none; any man who studies theology is the heretic of half an hour. A man who does not assimilate the various heresies one by one, wants genius, and is no true theologian. Gervase was a postulant to every heresy in ecclesiastical history for some time, but he came back to the high church party after all.

His father, Lord Festiniog, had gone to Rome, and had written from there that he wished to see him. At this time his wife, Lady Rhyader, for the second title of Festiniog was the same as their old one, was hopeless. She was moved from the sofa to her bed, and back again. He left her in the most reluctant manner, for she had not stood upright for seven years. He saw his father at Rome, and then came back to Llanavon, after an absence of six weeks.

There had been a silence as regards letters between them, which will be explained immediately. He thought from this that she might be worse; that she could write to him no longer. He got no word from her at all; he dared not go to his own home at Llanavon, for the servants might tell him she was dead.

He got out of the train at Llanganfraid and went across the mountains. After a long walk he came in sight of the castle, and everything seemed as usual. He looked on the terrace, and he saw her invalid chair there, with the rugs and shawls upon it, but it was empty.

He did not know what to think. He dashed from rock to rock. Space and time seemed to be annihilated. Here was the chair in which he had left her, a hopeless invalid; here was her fan, here were the letters from her friends strewed around;

here were the prints of her sacred feet on the cushion, but where was she?

'Alice! Alice!' he called aloud, 'where are you?'

'Gervase! Gervase!' answered a clear, strong voice from the shrubbery close by. 'I am here; come to me, darling.'

He ran into the thicket close by, and there was his wife, more beautiful than ever. She told him the truth at once.

'First I found that I could stand, and then I found that I could walk; but I thought that I would say nothing about it to any one. I should not even have told you, had you not surprised me in this way; during the last fortnight I must have walked miles.'

'But have you never asked Doctor W——' said Gervase.

'No! I do not think he knows his business at all. I shall be able to walk with you again now; I shall soon get stronger, I am sure. We can go over the hills together as of old. We shall be together as we once hoped to be.'

It now becomes necessary to leave Gervase in his new honeymoon, and follow Iltyd. The fact must be told at once; after the war he had done little good for himself or others. He had very nearly quarrelled with his father and his brother,

and was in their bad books. He had lost some money at horse-racing, a thing which has been done before. He had also run away with a young milliner from the West-end, which was bad; and was reported to have married her at the consulate at Leghorn, which was considered in certain circles to be worse. After having fulfilled the catalogue of his crimes he died. Some people were very sorry for him,—the commander-in-chief was, his father was; while his brother Gervase would have given half his income to get him back again; but unfortunately he was dead, and so sorrow was not of the least avail; no more in short than it would be in your case or in our own.

The sorrow of two people only took practical results. Lord Festiniog held consultation with his son Gervase. They determined that 'the woman' and her child just born should not suffer, in a pecuniary point of view.

This determination was made just after the birth of Gervase's first child; before the accident which made the now great house heirless. It was persevered in, most faithfully as far as 'the woman' was concerned for many years, until after the time when Gervase's second child, the one born after his wife's recovery, was a boy of fourteen.

The poor woman had from the first accepted her position most humbly: she thanked Lord Festiniog

and Lord Rhyader most heartily for their assistance, pointed out frankly to the family that she had six thousand pounds left her by her husband, and needed nothing except the future help of the family for the education of her little boy. Every promise was given, and of course no objection was made to her request to live abroad at Leghorn, near the grave of Iltyd; it was the best for all parties. No objection was made either to her supplementing her income by her trade: in fact, they never knew that she was doing so.

She lived in great retirement with her child in Leghorn, and she was more than once seen there by the family solicitor, young Mr. Drummond, who generally spent part of the long vacation there. He gave the most excellent account of her beauty, her character, and her accomplishments, and spoke so much about her, that one day Lord Festiniog turned from some papers which he was examining, and said:—

'Drummond, if you have really any honourable intentions towards the poor woman, tell me so. Our family have done her the most irreparable wrong; if you think of marrying her, I will most certainly make her a very handsome settlement.'

'My lord,' he replied, 'there are insuperable objections.'

'Nonsense, man, none but what may be got over with time.'

'I mean on my side, my lord.'

'Pray forgive me; I ought not to have mentioned the subject; only you spoke of her with such enthusiasm and admiration, that you cannot blame me.'

'I do not, my lord; but the strict truth is that before I knew my own mind I formed other ties.'

'I never heard of that.'

'Nor do I wish others to do so. I only mentioned the fact to account for my conduct.'

'Then it is your duty surely to keep away from her, is it not?'

'I assure you that there is not any danger, less than you could possibly dream of. Mrs. Arnaud, as she calls herself, is my friend, but she never could be anything more.'

Lord Festiniog pretended to be satisfied, but he was very far from being so. He put the matter aside as being no particular business of his, though he thought that the cool Drummond was one of the last men to make a foolish and clandestine marriage. Still he reflected that if one half of the world knew half of the follies committed by the other half, society would become impossible.

Drummond saw Mrs. Arnaud every summer for some years, and did her many little services. One

summer when he went, he found that she was at Ravenna, and followed her there, only to find her startlingly ill in a rather secluded lodging by the sea. She explained to him that she had only come there for the boy's sake, for that he wanted a little change, and her servant had told her that Ravenna was particularly healthy. 'The woman had been born there,' she said.

Drummond was very angry and loud about the matter. 'The woman wants to come here after her people, I suppose—confound her. It is one of the worst fever holes in Europe. You should come away at once.'

'I should like to do so, I am sure,' she said; 'but I feel too ill to move.' And indeed she seemed so. Drummond went away after her servant, and came back telling her that he had scolded the woman, that she was going to be ill, and that there was no danger.

It appears that the woman deceived them on that point; Mrs. Arnaud was very ill indeed, and Drummond was evidently terrified. The woman Carlina told him that she would be delirious for a few days. She became so, and sunk into a lethargy; once she seemed so nearly gone that he said to Carlina, in a way very different form his ordinary business one, 'if she dies, I will kill you.'

She did not die, she lingered on into a slow

return to consciousness. She asked for her child, but she was told that it was dangerous for him to come near her. The necessity for breaking the truth to her came at last. The child had caught the fever from her and had died.

She relapsed into delirium, and imbecility for a time. The first day she was in good health enough to travel she insisted on going straight to England as soon as she had put a stone on the grave of the boy. She was perfectly resolute about it, though Drummond rather urged her not to undertake the journey. Nothing could turn her, and to England she came in his company; and went straight to Lord Festiniog, asking his protection: he saw no reason why he should not grant it, and so gave his consent, which was by no means necessary, to her entering a society of religious ladies which had become known to his eccentric son in one of his religious experiments. Here she lived for some years unmolested, and almost happy. Her dead child was always before her certainly: but he was in heaven, so she thought how wicked it was for her to mourn for him. He could not always have been a child, but must have grown to be a man. And although her husband Iltyd was a saint, still all men were not satisfactory. He might have grown into a Drummond, and that would not have pleased her, kind as he was.

Lord Rhyader and his very charming wife frequently saw her; her guilt was so apparently innocent that they thought of it very little. Once Lord Rhyader, in one of his religious moods, spoke to her about it, and expressed himself glad to see how entirely she had repented.

'My guilt!' she said; 'I am not guilty. My poor Saint, Iltyd, made a most innocent mistake. That is all. You must not use that word again to me, my lord;' and she rose and looked at him in a way he did not like.

'Come,' he said, 'do not call me my lord, call me Gervase: do not let us quarrel. Are you happy here?'

'Yes. I shall go into the world no more, I think. My mother, and the rest of my relations left me soon after——Well you know what I mean.'

'So I understood,' said Lord Rhyader. 'You have, I suppose, given the money you have to the sisterhood. Not that I am likely to care about it, but if you have made any deed of gift in this direction, you might feel yourself, as it were, bound to stay here. If you desire to go once more into the world, I assure you that we will take the greatest care that you have ample means: even in case of your marrying again.'

'That is very nobly said, Gervase,' she replied;

'but I have kept what money I have entirely in my own hands.'

'Then you will not be beholden to us in any way?'

'If it becomes necessary, yes; at present, no.' And on these terms they remained.

Her money was part of it laid out in mortgage, and one of her mortgagers died. Her lawyer, who had been her husband's, was no other than her old friend Drummond. It was necessary that she should go to London and see him.

CHAPTER II.

THE RETURN TO THE WORLD.

YEARS had passed since she had seen Drummond, and years had passed since she had been in London. She had heard from him formally many times, and on one or two occasions confidentially. But as far as she was concerned he belonged to the past, and she supposed that he had entirely forgotten the passion which he had once undoubtedly entertained for her.

She approached his office with a feeling of curiosity. What was he like now? She thought he was a handsome fellow once, though never comparable to Iltyd. 'However, he played the villain to me; he pestered me with his attentions, and I only found out from Lord Festiniog that he was married all the time. If my lord knew that, what a rage he would be in! I will never tell the truth about that, for the man was very kind to me when my boy died. He was very agreeable, and I think that I could have trusted him once; I certainly cannot now.'

She went into his front office in Westminster, and sent in her name. No client was with him, and she was asked in at once. She passed into the room a handsome woman of less than forty; she came out, the clerks noticed, looking much older.

He was little altered, as she saw at once when he rose to receive her. He held out his hand and said 'Mary'; but she replied, 'Mrs. Arnaud, if you please.' The clerks heard no more. What passed between them is a mere matter of detail: no one knew in fact until long afterwards.

Her last words, however, as she was leaving, were perfectly audible. 'You are certainly right and I see it now. I thank you, though I never can reward you in the way you desire. You have done Iltyd's memory a great service. Could he know of it he would thank you as deeply as I do. I will vindicate his memory in my own way. Meanwhile, I will entirely keep your counsel for the sake of old times. Depend completely on that.'

Mrs. Arnaud never went back to the religious house where she had lived so happily. She stayed in London, and entered into a long and acrimonious correspondence with Lord Festiniog. They both lost their tempers over the matter, and at last he said that she might carry out her threat and go to anywhere her own way.

She did so, and from this moment our story as

regards her really begins. She was determined to live without the countenance of the family any longer. She will explain her reasons herself hereafter.

She consulted Drummond as to the best way of doing so. He at once told her of an excellent investment at No. 17, Hartley Street, Cavendish Square. It was a fashionable milliner's business which she could conduct herself most perfectly, and which was for sale by private contract. He had known of the fact through his own son being a lodger in the house.

'Your son,' she said.

'Yes,' he said; 'I have not brought him up to the law. He is in the Home Office; a poor appointment as yet. You have heard surely how painful my married life was?'

'Yes, Lord Festiniog told me some of it.'

'Well, I love the young man and he is devoted to me, but he has at times a look so fearfully like his mother that I dread to look at him. I could not have him sitting opposite me in the office all day, and every day. I should never forget the past. You can understand *that*, my dear Mrs. Arnaud.'

'Well indeed,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'the past has not been very happy for either of us. You, however, have had most to bear. I earnestly hope, Mr. Drummond, that the presence of your son in

my house will not cause us to meet oftener than courtesy permits.'

'You persist in your difficult resolution.'

'Yes.'

'Well, do not mention my name.'

'I will certainly not do so.'

And so Mrs. Arnaud began life once more on her own account.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. ARNAUD.

To be entirely alone in a strange house, after making a great resolution and carrying it out to the end: after doing a thing which was terrifying to think of before it was done, and when accomplished was more fearful still; was not by any means a reassuring position. Mrs. Arnaud felt that, as she sat down in her little dark back parlour, and thought of the past and of the future. She had taken the great step of her life, and was by herself, for the first time, face to face with facts.

She was at this time about forty, looking about five-and-twenty: complexion and features were still perfect, and her vast mass of dark hair, gathered behind and falling in a large curl over her left shoulder, was untouched with grey: she wore over it a small lace cap; from the throat downwards fell a long white shawl of the same material, and her gown was of dark purple silk. Possibly there was not in the West End of London that summer's evening a handsomer or more perfectly dressed woman than Mrs. Arnaud, of No. 17, Hartley Street, Cavendish Square, milliner and dressmaker.

She had come back at last to her old trade, which had been her mother's before her. After many years' seclusion as a religious lady, she had once more thrust herself before the public in fulfilment of a certain threat, and she was utterly alone in her terror: she had sent out her maid Rachel, and there was no movement in the house except the ticking of the French clock on the mantel-piece. She opened the door leading to the shop and looked in: it was nearly dark, for the shutters were up, but was set out ready for the morrow, when she would open it. It was full of ghostly female figures, in splendid dim-seen raiment, but without heads. Two of them nearest the window, in her sickly fancy, seemed like Marie Antoinette and the Princess de Lamballe risen from the dead. To-morrow morning the shutters would be down, and the garish sunlight would be in the place; she herself would have to take her place among the headless images, herself the best dressed among them all. On the dreadful morrow every noodle in London would have the right of staring at the beautiful Mrs. Arnaud, and would discuss her history unfavourably to herself. And although she wished that the morrow was come, and that her torture was begun, the present solitude was almost too horrible to be borne.

One of the bravest men in the world, a non-

combatant, said to us once, about the battle of the Alma, that he was more frightened at the beginning of that battle than ever he had been since he went in for *vivâ voce* in his little-go. Our friend was not easily frightened, any more than was Mrs. Arnaud. Still Mrs. Arnaud was in a state of nervous terror difficult to be conceived. She kept on saying to herself, 'If he were to come now, when Rachel is away and I am alone, I should go out of my mind. And he is in town, and might take it into his head to come. What on earth should I do then?' She sat down again and waited, with her heart in her mouth, for every footfall.

What could Lord Rhyader have done to her if he *had* come? She never asked herself that question: an all too blameless nobleman, devoted to his country's good, a man who would have died sooner than say a rude word to a costermonger's wife; what had she to fear from *him?* He was not likely to murder her; had he done so, her troubles would have been over for ever, and he would have fallen a victim to the outraged laws of the British Empire; two results, which in her present state of mind she could have regarded with quiet satisfaction. Why should she, therefore, be so dreadfully afraid of Lord Rhyader?

She was so afraid of his coming and finding her alone, however, that she could not sit still; she

wandered out from the little back parlour through the door which connected it with the hall. Here she found something which distracted her thoughts for a short time. She had not only bought the dressmaking business of her predecessor, but she had bought the lease of the house, and the lodgers also. She had got a categorical description of those lodgers, but she had never seen any of them, for it was her first evening in the house: according to her predecessor, they were the best lodgers ever seen: giving no earthly trouble and paying like clockwork. It suddenly struck her that her new servants had not arrived, that her lodgers were still out, and that it would be quite as well to go through their rooms and see that all was comfortable for them. The new servants were to come at night; Rachel would not be home before that time and would probably be cross; so she went upstairs with a candle, and with a new anxiety left her fright behind her for a short time.

The first floor, directly over the shop, was so large, that she lit the Honourable Algernon D'Arcy's gas for him, and then looked round his room, or rather her own. He was a young guardsman, she knew, so she was bound to love him, and assist him in every way, as a soldier's widow. After a very carefully carried out examination of his rooms, and such of his papers as were lying

about, she was forced to conclude that he had not so much as learnt the grammar of art, and had turned his genius principally to mathematics. His oleographs and chromolithographs were neither well selected nor well arranged; and as for the mathematical papers which were strewn about, she argued from the frequent corrections that it would take Mrs. Somerville and Sir John Herschel to set them right again. That he was an extremely diligent officer she had heard from her predecessor, but she left his room with the impression that he was cramming with an insufficient education. That he desired to be married to a religious young lady, and that there were temporary difficulties in the way, she discovered before she had been in the room ten minutes. We can no more tell how she did so than we can tell how a laden bee knows the way home, or how she discovered that he was careless with his money, and that his mother was dead. She, however, made all these discoveries before she left his room and went up to the second floor, saying to herself, 'Poor fellow, he wants looking after, I will treat him as though he were my own lost boy.'

The second floor was in the occupation of Mr. George Drummond, the lawyer's son and heir, a young clerk in the Home Office. His æsthetic tastes seemed to be superior to Mr. D'Arcy's, and

his habits more methodical; his solitary picture was an artist's proof of Holman Hunt's 'Finding in the Temple,' and altogether he seemed a methodical person; none of his papers were lying about; his pipes were arranged in racks over the mantelpiece, and on either side were two japanned receptacles, like those in an office, one marked 'bills paid,' and the other 'bills unpaid'; the former was full, the latter was empty; Mr. D'Arcy below had no such arrangement, and Mrs. Arnaud thought that Mr. Drummond would be an excellent lodger, who would require no taking care of, as he seemed perfectly able to take care of himself. He was evidently the sort of person she disliked heartily, the very arrangement of his books in his bed-room offended her; he must have put them right himself that morning, for there was no one else to do it: they were there in a row, just as if an idle valet had placed them. She took a dislike to Mr. Drummond, and a very strong liking for Mr. D'Arcy, 'Yet,' she thought, 'it is unfair to remember who his father was.'

Then she went down stairs again, and as she went looked into D'Arcy's room, and sat down in his easy chair for a time. Then she found herself in the hall, with the light playing in over the door, and she knew that she must go back again alone into her solitude.

There was a swift foot upon the steps, and for an instant she remained paralysed with the idea that it was Lord Rhyader. She might have re-assured herself had she had time to think, for whatever powers Lord Rhyader had over her, he had certainly not got the latch-key of her house. The new-comer had, and used it with familiarity; the door was open for a moment and she saw a tall figure against the evening sky. Then the door was shut, and she was in semi-darkness with a man.

'To whom have I the honour of—' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'George Drummond,' said a pleasant voice. 'I suppose you are Mrs. Arnaud.'

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. ARNAUD'S DEFIANCE.

IT was rather an unfortunate introduction between these two people, for at the sound of George Drummond's voice she grew faint, and asked him to give her his arm. He did so at once, of course, and led her into the parlour behind the shop. She sat down on the sofa, and George Drummond would possibly have asked her how she felt, but at that moment there came a thundering knock at the door.

Mrs. Arnaud started up at once. 'There he is,' she said: 'Mr. Drummond, I charge you not to leave me alone with that man.'

'Certainly not,' said George Drummond, 'but what is the man's name?'

'Lord Rhyader,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'If I am left alone with him there will be mischief.'

'Lord Rhyader!' said George Drummond: 'why I know him very well. What makes you afraid of him?'

'No matter,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'you stay with me, that is all.'

'I will stay with you, certainly,' said George Drummond; 'but when is your servant going to open the door?'

'My servants are all out,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'Heavens, he is knocking again.'

'Let me go and open the door,' said George Drummond.

'If you are not afraid,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'Who was ever afraid of Lord Rhyader?' he said; and while she lit the candle, he went and opened the door, so they came in together.

He was by no means a terrible looking person, being of peaceful aspect, about forty-five, wearing spectacles, and mutton-chop whiskers. Had you met him in the street you would have taken him for a successful barrister, a thing which he probably would have been had he not been possessed of fifty thousand a year in prospect. His first words as he came before George Drummond were, 'My dear Mary, what insanity is this?'

'Gervase,' she said, trembling and pale, 'you have brought it on yourself, and you see the results. Allow me to observe that there is a third person in the room, a stranger to me at all events, though his father was none.'

Lord Rhyader turned and saw George Drummond. 'Why, Drummond!' he exclaimed, with unfeigned astonishment, 'what brings you here?'

'I might ask you the same question, with the same look of amazement, Lord Rhyader,' said George Drummond, laughing, 'only Mrs. Arnaud, whom I found alone in the house, told me whom I was to expect. The mystery on my part is easily solved, I am Mrs. Arnaud's lodger.'

'I did not know you had moved,' said Lord Rhyader. 'I am very anxious to see Mrs. Arnaud alone. Nay, Mary, I will: sooner or later we must have an explanation. Why not have it over at once?'

'You had better go, Mr. Drummond,' said Mrs. Arnaud, quietly; and he went.

Lord Rhyader sat opposite to Mrs. Arnaud silent for half a minute, until he saw that he would have to speak first; he did so.

'This is scarcely fair, Mary.'

'I do not know what you mean, Gervase.'

'I think you do, for you have accepted my protection and that of Lady Rhyader for some years now, and acquiesced in your real position, which I confess was a very painful one.'

'I never acquiesced in my real position; I consented to a false one, for the sake of one who is lost. Now that I know the truth, I withdraw from my former situation, and prove him to be an honourable man.'

Her courage was coming back to her rapidly

now. The terror of this interview and this explanation had nearly driven her mad; here it had come: here she was face to face with facts, and she was not in the least degree frightened. How completely absurd artificial terrors are, and yet how terrible until they are faced. The thing had come on her, the anticipation of which had made her half crazy, and she was almost laughing over her winning hand. He had played his last card. He could do nothing more than he had done. He was entirely powerless. What a fool she thought herself for ever having been frightened.

'Mary,' he said, 'will you listen to reason?'

'Yes.'

'Will you allow me to go through the facts of our relations, like a lawyer?'

'Certainly. I shall correct you when you err, however.'

'Good,' said Lord Rhyader: 'My poor brother grossly deceived himself and you by inducing you and himself also to believe that you were married to him. Such you know was not the fact.'

'Such, I know, now, *was* the fact. Lord Festiniog and yourself could have known it had you cared to do so. I was married at the consulate at Leghorn, but I was told afterwards that the marriage was illegal. I believed it, whereas, Gervase, you know that I am as honestly married as you are.'

'Have you the proofs?'

'Yes, I certainly have. Otherwise I should never have had painted up over my shop door "The Honourable Mrs. Arnaud."'

'Mary, you have never done that!'

'Take the candle out into the street, and look for yourself, Gervase. You will see that I have done it; and I told your father that I would, and I have, and it will bring custom to me, and annoyance to Lord Festiniog.'

'Why do you wish to annoy my father? He has been very kind to you.'

'Kind! I am beholden to him for nothing, and after I have put the proofs of my marriage in his hand, he still hesitates to recognize me.'

'Then this is the dreadful quarrel between you two, of which he has spoken since I came from France.'

'I suppose so. It is a matter of indifference to me if it is or not. He knows that I could put my legal claims to be his daughter-in-law before any court of equity in the land, were it worth my while, which it is not, for I have no children. I offer to prove that your brother Iltyd was an honourable man; he tries to prevent me, and leave your brother's memory with the stain of villainy upon it. Iltyd was no villain, and I will not have him called so, even by his own father. What is the use of

discussing the matter further; your father has defied me, and the consequence is that I have had "The Honourable Mrs. Arnaud" painted up over my shop.'

'But, Mary, supposing all this to be true, why do you irritate my father so?'

'Why does he irritate me?' was her answer. 'He has refused to acknowledge me. Besides, what is the use of talking over the matter; the thing is done, and all London will see it to-morrow.'

'It will kill my father,' said Lord Rhyader.

'What nonsense people in your position can talk, when they give their minds to it. It will kill him, you say, to have his favourite son's innocence proved to the world. I, however, am not afraid of *him*.'

'I fear you are afraid of no one, Mary.'

'Yes. It is odd, but I am afraid of you. At times only, mind, but still sometimes.'

'At what times are those?'

'We have talked enough,' she replied. 'I am not afraid of you now, brother-in-law, at all events. I am your sister-in-law, and you cannot disprove it. Ah, you may wince, but you cannot. Take my defiance to Lord Festiniog, and tell him that if he will freely do what I could force him to do, acknowledge that his son was not a villain, I will paint out

my own name over the shop window, and paint in my niece's, for she is my heiress.'

'Your niece. I never saw her.'

'Nor I. She is my brother's child. She was brought up to the same trade as I was, and by that great mistress of it, my mother. You knew very little of us; we never desired that you should. My family, with which I have parted in consequence of marrying your brother, are the greatest family of dressmakers in the world. It is in the bounds of possibility that even my own mother may speak to me again, when Lord Festiniog recognizes me—as he shall, now I know the truth.'

'I suppose there is no use prolonging the discussion, Mary.'

'There is none to prolong,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'good night.'

Lord Rhyader felt that he had nothing to say but 'good night,' and so he said it and went.

CHAPTER V.

MORE OF THE FIRST NIGHT.

THE nightmare was gone. She had faced Rhyader, and he had not quarrelled with her. The whole secret of her terror lay in that. He was her husband's brother, and had been more kind to her than anybody. He was really the only person who connected her with her dead love. It is idle to think that women capable of such strong and almost violent resolutions, like Mrs. Arnaud, have not a deep fund of tenderness about them—that they cannot at times be utterly weak. Gervase was Iltyd's brother, and so she, who cared nothing for the world as represented by Lord Festiniog, was terrified lest he should quarrel with her. She might have known that he never quarrelled with anybody, but unfortunately she was without that information. He was gone to his father, and she feared he would have rather a stormy time of it.

However, it was early yet, and there was much more to be seen to before she went to bed. Rachel was unaccountably long gone, but here she was at

last. A square featured middle aged woman, who had lost her way, and her temper also, in the wilderness of London, and who was very cross. She had, it appeared, got into an omnibus to go a little way up Oxford Street, and had found herself at Smithfield. On getting out she registered a vow never to get into one of those vehicles again, and walked back asking her way. She had been unable to do the errand she was sent on, and was so utterly dazed that she thought she could not dare to go out again. Mrs. Arnaud remonstrated, but it was no use until George Drummond, coming down for something, at once volunteered to escort her. Mrs. Arnaud was so delighted with his good humour that she could have done anything for him. So she was left alone in the house again, but not in terror as before.

A single knock. It was the new maid. She was easily disposed of and set to work. Another single knock, it was the new footman, who, having for the time being deposited his box downstairs, asked if he could make himself useful at once. Mrs. Arnaud sent him at once upstairs to see if Mr. Drummond's fire was burning.

The latch-key again, loud voices in the hall, the door slammed, a crash of falling human bodies, and oaths. Captain D'Arcy and friend had come in in a very great hurry and tumbled headlong

over the footman's box. 'Here is a pretty beginning,' said Mrs. Arnaud, as she took out a candle, and discovered to her horror that the hall gas had never been lit. Two good-looking soldierly men were rubbing their shins and elbows, when this splendid, almost ghostly figure of Mrs. Arnaud approached them.

'Captain D'Arcy,' she said, addressing the wrong one: 'I am exceedingly sorry that the hall lamp was unfortunately not lighted sooner. I will do everything I can to make you comfortable, but I have only arrived this afternoon, and you must try to forgive the mishaps of the first night.'

'That is done in every theatre, madame,' said the man she had addressed, 'but I am not D'Arcy, he is somewhere back in the darkness, looking for his hat.'

D'Arcy reappeared with it on his head; the moment he saw Mrs. Arnaud, he took it off again and bowed. 'I beg a thousand pardons, Mrs. Arnaud, for entering the house in this manner, but I fancy that you have had some new convenience erected in the hall since this morning, with the existence of which I was unacquainted. I am aware somehow of the presence of a foreign substance.'

A nice smiling slight man, very pleasant to look at indeed, with a manner which set them all three

laughing; he bowed again and passed on. Immediately afterwards Rachel and George Drummond came in, and the whole house was in a bustle. She, the maid, the footman, and Rachel, were upstairs and down. It was eleven o'clock before she, being then at the top of the house, asked the maid (as pleasant a little maid as need be) whether she knew if her supper was ready.

'Mrs. Rachel had got it ready,' she said.

'Well, then, I shall go to it,' she said, adding to herself, 'She will not come to-night now. I hope she will to-morrow.'

She went down slowly to her own little back parlour, approached the fireplace, and then suddenly cried out loud, 'Good gracious have mercy upon us!'

CHAPTER VI.

HELOISE.

SITTING in Mrs. Arnaud's own chair, with open work-box beside her, and her bonnet off, looking exactly as if she had been sitting there habitually for the last ten years, was the most lovely and beautifully dressed little French brunette she had ever seen. She simply took Mrs. Arnaud's breath away, and if she had faded away at once Mrs. Arnaud would have taken her to be a hallucination of her own brain, produced by over excitement, and taken medical advice. But she was perfectly real; when she heard Mrs. Arnaud's exclamation she looked up and came towards her, sewing briskly. She put her work behind her, kissed Mrs. Arnaud on both cheeks, and then stood before her laughing with her eyes and mouth ('What teeth,' thought Mrs. Arnaud), but making no sound whatever. She was real enough.

Mrs. Arnaud repeated, 'Why, good gracious, goodness me!'

The beautiful little creature began nodding her

head now, and smiling instead of laughing. Mrs. Arnaud found it necessary to speak in spite of her delighted surprise: 'Why, my love, you must be Heloise, and are you dumb?'

It very soon appeared she was not; from between her pearly teeth came a babbling flow of the most perfect English, with just such a slight *soupçon* of French accent as would be totally unproduceable in English by a far cleverer pen than this can pretend to be, and with no imitation of which shall we trouble the reader. She began:—

'Yes, aunt,' she said, 'it is Heloise, your little housekeeper and assistant. Ah! but you have my father's eyes, though, and I should love you for that if for nothing else. We will be happy in this pretty little parlour, will we not?' And much more in the same pleasant way, before Mrs. Arnaud could get in a word at all.

'How did you get into the house, my dear,' she said at last.

'Chemin de fer du Nord, and then the packet-boat, and that you will understand was a sad thing; not that I was sick, aunt, but that the others were lamentably so. And in my opinion, those who are sick at sea should declare themselves at the custom-house, and be put in a separate cabin. Well, then, next the Douane, where I had nothing to declare; then the South-Eastern Railway to Victoria, and

then the cab there. Then I knocked at the door, and Madame Rachel opened it, and the cabman asked four shillings, to which demand Madame Rachel replied in words of the most proud and contemptuous, and gave him half-a-crown. He at once intimated that he should appeal to the judge of instruction, and she replied that he might if he liked. He then departed without success. She then let me in, and told me that you were busy *au troisième*, and I came in and set to work. You open to-morrow, I understand, and I should like to open well.'

'I have no doubt that we shall do so,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'But I think that you had much better go back to Paris.'

'Ah, you laugh now at me, but your reason?'

'You are too pretty, my love; I am sorry for it, but that is the simple fact of the case. I, when I made this bargain with my brother and my mother, never bargained for you.'

'Well, then, you have made a bad bargain, and must abide by it. Now, aunt, I am certainly not going back to Paris, and so the best thing we can do is to—' she paused.

'What now, little one?' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'Look into the shop, my dear aunt. Of your genius there is no doubt, but of your knowledge of later details, much.'

'We will have supper now, Heloise, and see to that in the morning,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'It is a good proposition,' she said, and they sat down to supper, Rachel waiting.

'Is my brother well,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'No,' said Heloise; 'he has the continual cramps in his stomach, which he derives from the drinking of the wine from the vineyard which he purchased of Alphonse Bourdon. The doctor advises him cognac, but he insists that the wine of his vineyard is better. I wish, I am sure, he would take to cognac, for no wine worth drinking is grown in the north of France. He, however, sent his love to you.'

'And your grandmother?'

'Well, for that, she is my grandmother, and tells me that I have no taste in colours, shall come to no good, and marry an English paper-hanger. I say, for my part, that I will certainly do so if I like him, and he has enough money.'

'We must try to do better for you than that, my love,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'You seem to have very good taste. Stand up.'

The little fairy did so. The jewel was certainly set in a case which, to Mrs. Arnaud's experienced eye was worthy of it. She put her elbow on the table and her hand on her forehead, and remained silent. Heloise with quiet dexterity arranged the

remains of the supper together, ready to be carried away, and when that was done rang the bell.

Rachel appeared, and Mrs. Arnaud took no notice.

'Madame,' said Heloise, 'shall I assist you to carry these things downstairs? we are in a little confusion to-night, as you doubtless know. I will tell you a secret, Madame Rachel. Have you ever travelled?'

'No, Miss.'

'Then I tell you that we French are far better housekeepers than you English. I shall give you the benefit of my advice and assistance, and if you rebel against me at all I shall beat you. Let us help one another; I will take these plates, you take those.'

Rachel did as she was bid. As soon as they were in the passage together, Rachel said to her, bluntly,—

'I would have given a thousand pounds, if I had it, Miss, to have you here. You will do more good for my mistress than what you know. You are the very person we wanted to keep her out of her low fits. For, brave as she is, she has them still. When you see one coming on, you, just in your pleasant way—bother that knocker, there is some one else now; we shan't get to bed until two. Here, Susan, come and open the door.'

Here was the last arrival for the night. Mrs. Arnaud had roused herself, and was silently helping Heloise and Rachel in putting away the things, when the door was opened; there was a scuffle in the passage. Susan screamed, and a railway-porter was towed into the room by a large dog. The porter finding himself apparently, as far as the dog was concerned, *en pays de connaissance*, let go of the chain; the dog leaped on the table and flew, apparently, at Mrs. Arnaud's throat. She embraced him. Rachel, who was counting the plate, banged him violently over the tail with a tablespoon, and the porter, like a man who had done his duty, took off his hat and wiped his fevered brow.

'Bran! Bran!' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'why it is my own Bran. And grumpy sister Mary has sent him to me after all. Has sister Mary sent any message with him?'

The porter said that he understood from the station-master that the dog was to be brought on that night at any expense. Lady Mary Corby had requested that it should be done. She, as the lady doubtless knew, was their chairman's sister; and so he had come away with it at once.

The porter was rewarded beyond his utmost hopes; Bran, a long Scotch terrier, was quieted, Captain D'Arcy's friend departed, and, oh! for the bathos, everybody went to bed.

Heloise slept in her aunt's room. Mrs. Arnaud thought that the girl was asleep. But when she had lain down the girl said to her, 'What did you say, aunt?'

'Nothing,' said Mrs. Arnaud. But that was not exactly true. She had said to herself aloud, 'The girl is too pretty and might get into mischief.' So there was peace in that house for one night, at all events.

CHAPTER VII.

OPENING DAY.

THE morning, the most dreaded morning came; and Mrs. Arnaud woke with very much the feeling of a criminal about to be hanged as soon as he had eaten a hearty breakfast; a thing which murderers under sentence seem always to do. She had to face the world once more in her old character; and that to her was worse than going out of it by an easy death. She said to herself (she would never have used such a vulgarism to any other human being), 'I would sooner be — well — executed, than go through to-day. They say that the death is so easy. Yet how can they possibly know? they have none of them been executed themselves.'

With such feelings did Mrs. Arnaud get out of bed, slip on her dressing-gown, and go to the window to look into the silent street. The atmosphere of London in the summer mornings is very good; even St. George's, Hanover Square, looked sharp and clear; and she thought that it would not do badly under the sky of Paris, though a poor build-

ing enough in our mid-day London smoke. She opened the window to let the fresh air in, so that it might awaken Heloise, and then she turned to her bed: it was empty.

Not only empty but perfectly made. Heloise's night-dress was lying in a pretty embroidered bag, on the smoothed pillow. Her peignoir was carefully folded on the chair beside the dressing-table; and as Mrs. Arnaud looked round, she perceived that everything which she, Mrs. Arnaud, could possibly want, had been set out and arranged for her while she was asleep, yet it was only seven o'clock.

'Well!' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'If that girl is as good a milliner as she is a lady's maid, we shall do very well. She must have a foot like a fox, for I never heard her. I suppose I had better dress myself. I wish she were not so pretty.'

She did so, but it took a long time, though it was only her first toilette. She was beautiful, and she knew it well; but she never dressed because she was beautiful, but from the instinct of her life. She was perfectly dressed when she left her room to go downstairs, but she would no more have gone beyond the street-door in such a costume, than she would have walked about the Palais Royal in her dressing-gown, or than she would have used her magnificent voice in a music-hall at Stepney. She had no passion for dress, only an instinct, which

some say is only acquired at Paris, though we should say that it was equally strong at Metz.

Coming downstairs, however, perfectly dressed, she passed into the parlour; she found her breakfast ready, with the coffee on the hob, and her hot roll before the fire. There also she found Heloise, rather better dressed than herself, if it were possible, sitting in her chair, with a great fold of blue satin over her knees, the hem of which she was turning up diligently.

'My dear aunt,' she said, 'come here and kiss me, and tell me that you forgive me for not waking you. I cannot serve you, for I should soil my hands; but Rachel and I have your breakfast ready. I have been in terror over this dress, and I find that you have no machine in the house.'

'What dress is it?'

'It is Lady Bludyer's, due to-morrow. I have sent out to hire a machine, and I will manage it for you.'

'But I know nothing about it.'

'No doubt; but it is in the order-book, which I looked over this morning, and it must be done. There are many other things in the order-book, do you see. I can manage them all with a machine. Your predecessor was a vastly stupid person, but in spite of her stupidity she had a good connexion; you and I must keep it.'

'You little jewel, you shall stay with me,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'And indeed I mean to do so,' said the busy little Heloise. 'There is one thing, aunt, which I wish to know.'

'And that?'

'Is this little parlour of yours private? Do your lodgers come here?'

'Never.'

'Make that a rule. I am not afraid of Frenchmen, but manners are different in different countries, that is all.'

'No one shall speak to you, dear.'

'I did not mean that. I shall speak to any one I choose, but always first. Remember that. Ah! here is Madame Rachel.'

When at ten o'clock the shop windows were opened, Mrs. Arnaud sat down among the headless effigies in a perfectly calm frame of mind. She had changed her toilette, and was ready for anybody. She heard the busy machine of her niece Heloise going in the back parlour, and, with that brave beauty at her back, feared nothing.

For she thought that the girl was as brave, as honest, and as true as she was herself, and she knew also that the girl had experiences of a world of which she knew nothing, the world of Paris. She herself knew Leghorn, Naples, and Rome, but

what was that? The girl's taste in colour was more bright than neutral, but was every one to dress in the same way? The girl was a mine of gold to her, and besides she loved her, and intended to take uncommonly good care that no one else should. Little did she dream the truth.

Mrs. Arnaud sat in her shop from ten o'clock until twelve, but nobody came. She began to think about the bankruptcy court, and went into the parlour to speak to Heloise on the subject. The moment she had done so, she was fetched back by the footman, and began life in earnest once more.

Her first customer. She remembered her well in her mother's time, and the lady remembered her very well; but from motives, possibly of delicacy, did not choose to say so. She only said,—'I believe that you are the daughter of Madame Merton, who emigrated most unfortunately to Paris after a sad domestic affliction some years ago. If you inherit her taste you ought to do well.'

'To mention it the first day,' thought Mrs. Arnaud. 'I will plague her. What would Lady Sotheby desire?' she asked.

Lady Sotheby, a beauty, originally of very low extraction, who was fifty if she was a day, was now about to marry a third time. The new bridegroom was a rich manufacturing engineer, without any pretensions to birth, a man who had worked at the

bench, it was said, but with infinitely more pretensions to be a gentleman than ever Lady Sotheby had to be a lady, if manners and education were taken into account. He was one of the first practical engineers in the land, and an F.R.S.; and, at forty-five, he had taken it into his head to propose to Lady Sotheby. She had hummed and hawed over the matter, and at last had referred him to her last noble father-in-law, who told him that he, as far as he was concerned, was perfectly willing in the matter, and told her, in a private interview, that she had made a splendid catch, and that he hoped she would leave off her nonsense for the future, because her new husband most certainly would not stand it.

Lady Sotheby at first seemed to want everything in the shop, but she settled down at last to a purple satin gown, and a powder blue (*Chasseur d'Afrique*) cloak, both to be made up at once and sent home. She then asked what were the fashionable colours for a bride on her wedding tour.

Mrs. Arnaud's irritation against her found its vent at last. She said,—

'For a lady who is going to be married for the third time, within three months of her own mother's death, slight mourning is the most fashionable, my lady.'

The old Elizabethan expression of one person

'looking daggers' at another is of no use to us at all. Lady Sotheby looked cobras and rattlesnakes. If she could have bitten Mrs. Arnaud and have given her the hydrophobia she would have done it. But the good millionaire had heard nothing, so she only said, 'You will be pleased to send the dress and the cloak by to-morrow.'

'I beg your ladyship's pardon,' said Mrs. Arnaud: 'Do you mean to wear them together?'

'Certainly,' said Lady Sotheby.

'Then,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'I am sorry to say that I cannot supply you. If you went into the streets such a figure, and the iniquity of it was traced home to me, I should lose the confidence of my customers, and might as well shut up my shop.'

Lady Sotheby said, 'Woman!'

'Yes, my lady. I think we understand one another; but to be fair and frank with you, I am not afraid of you at all. I neither want your good word nor your custom.'

On the dignified departure of that lady, she went back to Heloise. 'Brave aunt,' she said, 'I heard every word. Is he rich? Will he pay the money she owes grandmamma in Paris?'

'Never name it, child; never make mischief between man and wife. Here is another customer.'

'I will undertake this one,' said Heloise, going

quietly into the shop. The footman whispered to her, 'Lord and Lady Morningside.'

The old Scotch judge had seated himself, and Lady Morningside was wandering about among the fine things. My Lord, very old and short of breath, looked at Heloise as she curtsied to him; he said not one word, but called to Lady Morningside to come and look. She did so, and he remarked: 'That is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen in my life. She is the very image of what you were when I married you.'

Heloise heard him, and said to herself, 'Ah, I have heard that once or twice before. But now to business, my good people: her ladyship was never any more like me than I shall be like her. I shall never have a nose like a tapir, and a mouth like a hippopotamus.'

She fancied herself very witty to have thought that; she made up her mind to tell it to her aunt and make her laugh, but our little miss got a lesson which she did not forget.

'My dear,' said Lady Morningside, 'I want a cap.'

'Shall I assist your ladyship to take your bonnet off?'

'No, I will do that myself, I think,' said the old lady: 'If you were to take off my bonnet you might take off my wig too, and then a pretty

spectacle I should look without a hair on my head.'

'I should never have guessed it, madame,' said Heloise.

'You must be pretty young at your business then, my child,' said the old lady, 'or you would know false hair from real. My own hair was as good as yours once. What pretty teeth you have.'

Heloise could not help smiling. Not to show them—of course not.

'Ah! I could smile once,' said the old lady, 'now I can only grin; but my teeth are as pretty as yours. They are artificial, my dear, and cost thirty guineas. You will be a worse spectacle than I am if you live, for there are no women like Ninon l'Enclos left among the French. See that you get a husband who will love you to the end, as mine does.'

'How am I to select him, madame?' said Heloise.

'God will select him for you. Do your duty by him, and when you are seventy you will be as happy as I am now. Once get a good man, and he will be exactly, as far as you are concerned, what you make him.'

Heloise had nothing to say, but she thought of these things afterwards. Lord Morningside, who had not been in London for some years, seemed inclined to decorate this rather hideous old lady as

though she had been a bride. Though he would have died on the block sooner than confess it, he had a distrust of all Scotch millinery and jewellery as being provincial. Abusing and pretending to hate London, he nevertheless determined that Lady Morningside should return to Edinburgh in garments which should raise envy in the county families, among whom he, as a mere law lord, risen from the ranks, and his wife, who had, it was said, been a shepherdess, were merely admitted by courtesy. Yet, the strange, childless old couple were well known, and profoundly respected. She, in Edinburgh, as one of the most charitable and excellent of women: he, in London, as the shrewdest of Scottish lawyers. Mrs. Arnaud could have had no better advertisement than the good will of the grand old man.

Nor, indeed, did she suffer in a pecuniary point of view, as she found when she joined the party. Lady Morningside was buying everything she could lay her hands on, and what is more, exercising very great good taste. The Scotch women have, on the whole, better taste in dress than the English, though it takes a Frenchwoman to wear tartan to perfection. Mrs. Arnaud found no fault with Lady Morningside's arrangements, save in slight details, which that lady altered at once by her advice. Finally, Lord and Lady

Morningside got the footman to fetch a four-wheeled cab, and went away in it, leaving Mrs. Arnaud richer by 116*l.*

'Now,' said Heloise as they sat down to table: 'we will have dinner. If other customers come, Rachel shall serve them, and put on their things upside down. That we shall make our fortunes is quite undoubted. But she is an old skeleton who has come out of the cupboard.'

'Who?'

'Why, Lady Morningside,' said Heloise. 'She said that I should be just as terrible a figure as she is when I am her age. But she said, moreover, that I must choose my husband by chance, and form him afterwards. I would not take the trouble. Aunt, what is the use of having a husband at all? that is what I am unable to discover. If you loved a man I can understand that you undertook his sorrows and your own together, until the day of judgment. But a mere husband, Bah! a man you have never seen half-a-dozen times, and who may be disagreeable, and spend all your money. I cannot see why women who can earn their own living should marry.'

'You do not like men then, my little niece,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'On the contrary, I adore men; but I do not want them to marry me.'

'You mean that you have never seen a man you cared to marry.'

'No.'

'Have you had any lovers?'

'Two. They, however, were lovers sent by the family, and came with bouquets and new gloves. I soon disposed of them. They came smirking as though the affair was settled. One, a sensible fellow, took his answer and went away: the other persisted after I had given my answer. The Burgundy blood which is in me came out. I arose in my fury—I was at work—and told him that if he did not leave the room, I would stab him to his false heart with my needle. He was frightened, this one, and departed like the other. Save these I have had no lovers.——See, we have a soldier in the room.'

She actually sat before Mrs. Arnaud and uttered all this without change of countenance, looking Mrs. Arnaud straight in the face. She surely should have hailed from Gascony, not from Burgundy.

'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Arnaud,' said a very quiet voice, 'but I am on duty this afternoon, and I should be exceedingly obliged if you would—I think I see Mademoiselle Heloise, whom I knew in Paris.'

'Surely,' she said, rising. 'Why, it is M.

D'Arcy, my old confidant. And how goes the— ?'

He shook his head, laughing, and addressed Mrs. Arnaud. He was a well-looking young man at all times, and looked all the better in his uniform. He was certainly very attractive, and Mrs. Arnaud might have wished him less so, but she remembered what she had seen upstairs, and did not mind. He was engaged.

'I am pleased to renew my acquaintance with the young lady. I hope I shall be allowed to pay my respects to her sometimes. I will take my leave.'

They had a busy afternoon; her predecessor's customers seemed to rally round her very well, and it was evident that she and Heloise were in possession of a handsome income, and so ended the first day, Heloise being more cheerful in the evening than she had been in the morning, if possible, and continually wondering why women were ever so silly as to marry.

'You will be married within a year, my fawn,' said Mrs. Arnaud, as they went upstairs.

'That is quite unlikely,' replied Heloise, looking sharply at her aunt from the shadow.

CHAPTER VIII.

JAMES AND GEORGE DRUMMOND.

WHEN Drummond, the lawyer, told Mrs. Arnaud that he disliked to see George Drummond, because he reminded him of his mother, he told a falsehood. He was greatly attached to the young man. No father ever loved a son better or did more for a son. Lord Festiniog often noticed it to Lord Rhyader, and thought it very much to Drummond's credit, for, to tell the truth, Drummond had made a hopelessly bad match, and Mrs. Drummond, long before her death, was settled out of his house by a monetary arrangement. With her we have nothing whatever to do. She was dead, and Drummond, a comparatively young man, was free to marry whom he liked, provided that the lady was of the same mind as himself.

The day after Mrs. Arnaud's new entry into the world, he had asked George to dine with him, and George and he were sitting together over their wine in a small but very expensive house in Park Lane.

'Well, and have you seen your landlady yet, George?' said Drummond, passing the decanter, 'and if so, what do you think of her?'

'I think her a magnificent woman; I was very much taken with her. I tell you everything, you know, father, and so I tell you this. I saw her under very peculiar circumstances. Rhyader came to her the first night she was in the house, and terrified her.'

'Ah, I daresay she would be frightened at seeing him for the first time under the circumstances.'

'And what were they?'

'Well, I will tell you,' said Drummond. 'She has, after many years, found out that she was really married to Rhyader's brother, Iltyd, and she insists that my lord should recognize the fact. They have had a most tremendous fight over it. She told him that she would shame him into acknowledgment by writing "The Honourable Mrs. Arnaud" over her shop door. Has she done so?'

'I don't fancy she has, but I was never aware of the fact that you knew her. You astonish me completely,' said George Drummond. 'There is "Mrs. Arnaud" in very large letters, but there are undecipherable words on each side. So she may have done so.'

'Clever woman! I daresay if you look closer you will find that she has.'

'But will Lord Festiniog acknowledge her?'

'I don't know. After fighting the woman single-handed, he came to me for assistance, and asked me, as his legal adviser, whether she had any claim. I looked into the matter, and told him that he had not a leg to stand on, and that she was his son's wife. Then he got into a huff, and said he should have counsel's opinion. But all the counsel in the world will make her nothing but his son's wife. I told him that as she had no children, the acknowledgment of her could do him no harm, and proposed to him to offer her a sum of money to keep her counsel. Even he laughed at the idea of such a thing, and so the matter stands to this hour.'

'Who was Mrs. Arnaud, father?'

'Marie or Mary Merton. Her father was an Englishman, her mother the queen of French modistes in England. When her daughter went off from Bond Street with young Iltyd Arnaud she migrated to Paris, and refused to see or hear of her daughter; but now Mrs. Arnaud has proved her marriage, they are the best friends in the world, again, I believe. I saw her in Paris only a fortnight ago. She is sending over a niece of Mrs. Arnaud's, a favourite grand-daughter of hers, to

assist her in the business. Have you seen her?'

'No, I am not in the least degree likely to see her.'

'Well, that is lucky for your heart, at all events. She is the most beautiful creature I ever saw.'

'Then my fellow lodger, D'Arcy, should see her, and console himself.'

'I know what you are going to say. Poor spoony, that is all over with him. I can tell you that he has got his *congé*.

'From her father?'

'Yes, and from the whole lot of them. The family would not have stood such a thing for a moment. He can't keep her as she would expect. She will be much happier without him; I daresay he won't mind; he will be free again, and if he makes much acquaintance with Mademoiselle Heloise, he will be a dangerous rival.'

'To whom?'

'To yourself.'

'But I don't want to have anything to do with the girl.'

'Well, you may be deficient in good taste, of course.'

'But I could not marry a French milliner.'

'Why not, if you asked her? You are only an attorney's son. I can tell you, from what I have heard of the young lady, that *I* should not object.'

'Ah, you are having your joke, sir; I thought I was to be a gentleman.'

'And so you are; though, mind, I will not have you an idle one. You stick to your desk; it won't give you much money, my boy, you must come to me for *that*, but it will give you position; you will rise in that service, with your talents and industry, far higher than you could in my business. Do you want any money, George?'

'No, father; I can lend you ten pounds if you like. Why should I want money? You give me my horse and my clothes, and keep me like a gentleman; you have done everything which could be done for me. I wish that I could go back to the university, and get a better degree than I did, to show my gratitude, but that is too late.'

'I am perfectly satisfied, George; your degree was good enough. If I had meant you to take a better degree I should have sent you to another college. You held your own bravely, and I am proud of you.'

George reached over his hand, and the other took it silently. Mr. Drummond's hand shook, and his face was disturbed by some strong emotion. The conversation changed, and not long afterwards they parted.

CHAPTER IX.

FESTINIOG AND RHYADER.

MRS. ARNAUD'S dreadful threat of writing up 'the Honourable Mrs. Arnaud,' over her shop, had actually been fulfilled. But it had been done in a way which left a compromise possible. Two little flourishes on the left contained the dreadful words, those words of fate, 'the honourable'; but no one could read them; while on the right were two other little flourishes, also illegible, containing the words 'milliner and dressmaker.' Between those two scrolls came the great golden legend, 'MRS. ARNAUD.' And so no one, unless he had taken an opera-glass, was one whit the wiser.

With the exception of Lord Rhyader. After his interview with Mrs. Arnaud he had reconnoitred the premises, and had seen that she had really done as she threatened. He departed and told his father. They laid their heads together, and agreed that it would not do to trifle with her.

'And it would not be right to trifle with her either,' said Lord Rhyader, 'now that we know all we do.'

'Why, no!' said Lord Festiniog. 'As long as I was in doubt I did not care. But there is no doubt any longer now. She is your sister-in-law, and her marriage was perfectly legal. It would be most ungentlemanly, and also most impolitic to dispute it. I suppose she will marry Drummond.'

'I don't think so. Still she might. We can, however, not dispute the fact of her having been married.'

'Now, Rhyader, will you explain to me this? Drummond must surely have known of the circumstances, for he was often with her abroad. Why did he conceal them from me? I appealed to him about the matter, and he at once gave it against me. I don't clearly make that out.'

'Nor I either,' said Lord Rhyader. 'If I were to say that I distrusted Drummond, I should lie: if I said that I trusted him, I should also lie. He loved her once, you know: that explains much. He is a lawyer: that explains more. He evidently could have known the thing had he chosen, but did not choose until you appealed to him to do his duty by you. I don't profess to understand a man like Drummond. If you had had a drunken wife sir, you might have had a craze or so in your brain. Have you any fault to find with him, further than this concealment, if concealment it be?'

'None. Money grows under his hands; I have really nothing to do but to sign my name. And, besides, he must be very rich.'

'You had better let him marry Mary, sir,' said Lord Rhyader.

'The Honourable Mrs. Drummond,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I should not care. But she would not have him.'

'Indeed, I think so.'

'However,' said Lord Festiniog, 'you agree with me that this squabble with Mary ought to be patched up. You had better leave the how to me.'

'Oh yes, sir. She is such a dear creature, and such a noble creature, that now, when we know all, or think we do, we should not continue it. Besides, in doing so, we redeem poor Iltyd's memory so entirely. I pray you to do it.'

'It shall be done, Gervase: it shall be done. Say no more.'

'You won't show any distrust to Drummond, father, will you?' said Lord Rhyader.

'Distrust Drummond, bless my heart, no. I will not distrust him at all, at least in money matters. Yet he did an unprincipled thing once: he made love to Mary when he was a married man: that was utterly ill; but he was mad then, and it was very long ago. Have you seen his son lately?'

'That prig? yes, I often see him.'

'What is he growing to be like? Does he take after his father? I like what I have seen of him.'

'I do not particularly. George Drummond is one of my pet horrors. Rugby, with a finish off of Brasenose, and a *post pleiocene* crust of Home Office.'

'Cad?'

'Why no, worse than that. You may lick a cad into shape, but George Drummond has licked himself into shape, and a most objectionable shape it is.'

'I 'll see more of him,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I fancy, from your description, that I should like him very much indeed. By-the-bye, that cub of yours has never been near me for two days, and his mother not for four. If they are going to cut me altogether, let me know it.'

'Oh, I should have told you. Alice and George have run down to Richmond for a few days.'

'I will follow them as soon as I have done with Mary. I shan't be long with you, Gervase, and then you will have all. Let me see the boy as much as I can.'

'I am afraid that Barri loves you better than he does me, sir,' said Gervase.

CHAPTER X.

LORD FESTINIOG AND MRS. ARNAUD.

SOME days had passed of Mrs. Arnaud's new life. Even in that short time business had accumulated most rapidly. People had seen her and Heloise, and told other people about them. Lord and Lady Morningside had sounded the first trumpet about them with no uncertain sound, and when a trumpet is sounded at the beginning of the season, it is generally attended to. There was a general assembly over these two splendid women, and the world rushed to see them. Had anything been wanted to add to their popularity, it was the fact that Lady Sotheby steadily abused them, and said that Mrs. Arnaud had been grossly impertinent to her. As *she* was always impertinent to that part of the world to which she was admitted, this was a further recommendation, and so Mrs. Arnaud found her hands full.

Lady Drycough, who delighted in all the innocent wickedness of this world, once examined

Heloise as to what Mrs. Arnaud had said to Lady Sotheby. Heloise said that she was not sure, but that she believed that her aunt had said that she was not there to dress up Guy Fawkes. This being repeated with emendations, did them vast good, for insulting the common enemy is a more popular thing in a certain world than assisting the common friend.

On the afternoon of the third day, Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise had been extremely busy. Affairs had increased on them so far, that Mrs. Arnaud had written to Paris for Heloise's sister, Clotilde. Mrs. Arnaud felt perfectly faint with the work, and, asking Heloise to stand in the breach for a quarter of an hour, said that she would go into her back parlour, and sit down in her chair.

Her chair; her own sacred chair, was turned with its back towards the door, and in it was a square dogmatic head, covered with short white hair, the top and rear of which was only visible. The head was reading her illustrated Wordsworth, and the hands which belonged to it were long, thin, and old, and the right hand was covered with diamonds.

'Is that you, Mary?' said the head, without moving.

'Yes, my lord.'

'Yes, fiddle. Come and sit down somewhere. I

want to talk to you. Sit down somewhere, where I cannot see you. Have you sat down?'

'Yes, Lord Festiniog.'

'Good, Mary. I have been entirely in the wrong in the matter in dispute between us. I have asked Drummond about it, and he says that you are in the right. I acknowledge you, entirely, as my poor son Iltyd's wife, and your patience, and your virtues under your wrongs, have entirely endeared you to me. If you had any children living I might have been more eager to dispute your claim to be my daughter-in-law, but it would have been no use. I see that your marriage was legal in every way, and I rejoice that the cloud is removed from the memory of my son, who was dear to me, with all his faults. Do you desire anything more?'

'What more can I desire? I only wish that our old relations should be renewed, and that I may see Lady Rhyader and the boy again. Pity my childless condition, and let him come to me sometimes.'

'He shall come to you as often as you choose, though, faith, I am speaking for Rhyader rather freely. But he will not object, and you need not fear Alice. Don't spoil the boy, you know, for he is the only hope of the house.'

'I will take care of him,' said Mrs. Arnaud, bending over and kissing Lord Festiniog's forehead.

'Now, good papa, would you like to see my niece Heloise?'

'Very much indeed. I hear she is the most beautiful creature in London.'

Much as he had heard of her, however, in a few days, the reality surpassed his expectation; he had a short conversation with her, and, as he rose to go, he said to himself, 'Master George Drummond had better look after his heart in that quarter'; but in the hall he met D'Arcy and put a rider to his opinion, 'unless she takes a fancy to that spark, indeed, which is quite probable; he seems as though he lodged in the house, for he came in with the latch-key. Mary has been a fool to have such a girl as that in the house, with young men for lodgers; she will have a murder about her; and now that I have privately acknowledged Mary as a dressmaker, we shall be still more distinguished. I will go back and have another talk to her.'

This time he went right into the shop and beckoned her to follow him into the parlour. She did so at once, to the surprise of the one customer who was there, and to the astonishment of the footman.

'Mary,' he said, 'I have forgotten one or two things. Our reconciliation need not be exactly public, I suppose, but I think that Rhyader and I had better have a paper drawn up by Drummond, say-

ing that we are fully satisfied on the subject of Iltyd's honour and your own.'

'I don't want Drummond in it at all, my lord,' she said. 'Gervase and you could do it perfectly. I don't want to be thrown against Mr. Drummond: he is—'

She was as near as possible saying, 'He has for his own purposes, I believe, done me a great service; but he has been utterly false to you,' when she made this awkward pause.

'He is what?' said Lord Festiniog, not helping her in the least.

'He is,' said Mrs. Arnaud, looking steadily at him, 'attached to me.'

She expected an outburst of anger, but none came, to her surprise. He said, 'I suspected that long ago, but he would never do for you, would he? not to be thought of?'

'Can you, who knew your son Iltyd, ask me such a question?'

'Why, only with the idea of getting one answer,' he said, good-naturedly. 'I say, to change the subject, you will have trouble with that niece of yours, the young men will be cutting one another's heads off about her.'

'She can take care of herself,' said Mrs. Arnaud; which Mademoiselle Heloise certainly could do, though not exactly in the way Mrs. Arnaud meant.

'Ah! but can the young men take care of themselves?' he replied. 'I never could, I know. By-the-bye, Mary, put a dab of black paint on the left of your signboard, will you, unless—'

'Unless what?'

'Well, I was going to write it, but I will speak it—Unless you choose to have ten thousand pounds settled on you; to make over your business to your niece; and to retire comfortably.'

'No. You are most kind and generous. You always were, save for a short time, but my answer will be now, always, no. A few days have shown me that I want employment, and I shall be happy here. Our secret is entirely our own; as for the small matter which, to spite you, I wrote up, it was done so artistically that I doubt if the painter could read it. No, Lord Festiniog, leave me to be happy in my own way, but let the boy come to me. I wish to see the boy sometimes. It is not much to ask. Send Barri.'

CHAPTER XI.

MADAME.

'I SUPPOSE, aunt Arnaud, that you have heard from my sister Clotilde?' said Heloise, within a week of the last conversation.

'Well, my dear, I have. I heard yesterday.'

'Then she is coming at once, I suppose?'

'Why, no; I do not think that she is coming at all. I am afraid, my dear, that your grandmother is coming instead.'

'*Le bon Dieu ne le per*—' Heloise had got as far as that, when she was stopped by a look from Mrs. Arnaud, so she never said, '*mettra jamais*'; which was what she meant to say. Mrs. Arnaud rode the high English horse over her at once.

'Family circumstances,' said Mrs. Arnaud, solemnly, 'have for certain reasons brought about a coolness between my mother and myself. Those circumstances and reasons are now removed. I shall welcome my mother as a daughter should.'

'But, grandmamma,' said Heloise, looking as cross as she could, and shrugging her shoulders.

'She is your grandmother, my dear, and my mother; you should remember that.'

'I am not likely to forget it, aunt. I came here to escape from her, and now she is coming after me. I thought that we were going to be so comfortable.'

'My child,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'have you earned comfort? What have you ever done which should give you the right of avoiding your grandmother?'

'Well, if you come to that, aunt, what have you done which should give you the right of avoiding *your* grandmother?'

'My grandmother is in Heaven,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'I wish mine was,' said Heloise.

'Child, you talk nonsense! Child, you are a fool! Your grandmother is worth ten of you or me. She has strong political opinions, and is of the old fashion; but there are very few women in Europe like her.'

'Very well, aunt,' said Heloise: 'I will submit, I never did anything else. How long is it since you saw her?'

'Twenty-two years. I informed her that I had made a certain discovery. She most generously

believed me, without waiting for further proofs, and extended to me her full forgiveness.'

'*You* won't stand her,' said Heloise, 'I can tell you *that.* I will be all obedience, but it *is* hard that a poor girl like myself should find no protection in Europe. However,' she added to herself, 'the remedy is always in my own hands.'

A great friendship had arisen in this short time between Heloise and her aunt's ill-tempered maid, Rachel. Friendships of this kind are made up of similarities and contrasts. But, Victor Hugo apart, an old, cross, and ugly woman may have a strong friendship for a very young, well-tempered, and beautiful woman, if they have anything in common. Rachel was old, ugly and cross; Heloise was young, beautiful, and very amiable. Rachel had, at the first, been strongly opposed to the introduction of Heloise into the house, yet, now, she would have deserted her mistress to serve her. They had a *point d'appui,* these two. Rachel very quickly discovered, Suffolk woman as she was, that the French girl, Heloise, was a better housekeeper than she was herself. Heloise had never asserted herself in the kitchen, but when she had seen Rachel holding up her eyes over the iniquities and wastefulness of the London servants, she had answered with her eyes.

These demonstrations brought about, first, con-

sultation, then, confidence. Heloise showed Rachel twenty things in French domestic economy which she never knew before, and Rachel was almost converted to the idea that the French were not idiots. Heloise was half English, however, and so, without withdrawing her allegiance to the British throne, Rachel was able to believe in Heloise as the most charming person, next to the Princess of Wales. After this announcement of the coming of Mrs. Arnaud's mother, they had a slight confidence in the kitchen.

'My grandmamma is coming, Rachel,' said Heloise, 'and there is no more rest for us this side of the grave.'

'That will be worse for you than for me, Miss; will it not? What sort of a lady is she?'

'*Hein*, I do not know. At least, I cannot say. She is different with different people. She is not kind to me, but to my sister most kind. She loves money, and in my opinion comes here—'

Suddenly Heloise remembered that she was talking to a servant, and left off. In France things were different, she argued; in England no one talked with servants. Rachel wished to continue the conversation, but Heloise was inexorable. Rachel, however, had heard as much as she chose to hear, and she was strongly prejudiced against Madame Mantalent, before she ever came into the house.

But the old lady arrived before affairs had in any way settled down, and before Mrs. Arnaud quite knew what she was about. Business was coming in in the most remarkable manner. Heloise and Mrs. Arnaud had not an hour to themselves. The receipts were enormous, *so large, in fact, that Mrs. Arnaud was at her wits' end to supply stock.* She was in an *embarras des richesses.* She must borrow some money soon, for she had spent all her own, and though people bought, it was on credit. Should she borrow of Lord Festiniog? that she did not wish to do. Drummond would let her have any money she wanted, but that would not do by any means. Within a fortnight, she saw that she must expend more money in replenishing stock, and at the end of that time her mamma arrived from Paris, and relieved the garrison, not only with money, which might have been got elsewhere, but with taste and experience, which could have been got nowhere.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Arnaud's freedom, and that of Heloise, was gone once more. Madame was in her way a harder taskmaster than she had ever had before. At once, Rachel and Heloise had entered into a Holy Alliance against her, and Mrs. Arnaud, as an Englishwoman, preserved an armed neutrality. She was amused to see the extraordinary confidence which was growing up between

Heloise and Rachel: it was doubtless due to their hatred of the common enemy.

When she first came, Rachel was extremely astonished at Heloise's account of her, for she seemed a very agreeable old lady, who was most affectionately attentive to Mrs. Arnaud and most courteous to herself. But Rachel soon found out what was the matter with her, and groaned in spirit. It is difficult to explain why she drove every one mad, but we must endeavour to do so.

In the first place, she never stopped talking, which might have been got over, but then she never talked about anything in any way agreeable, or had a solitary good word for any one: she and her family were the most important people in the universe, and the world seemed to her to be in a combination against them. Then she would have everything explained to her at full length, of whatever nature it might be, and never by any chance allowed that any one had done right. If the most trifling thing went wrong, it was because she had not been consulted about it: prove her wrong in any one thing and she would speak a quarter of an hour afterwards, exactly as if she was in the right. She was a prodigiously good housekeeper, and although she took none of the responsibility of the housekeeping herself, she never ceased talking about it to her daughter.

There she was, however, sitting in Mrs. Arnaud's easy chair, and talking without ceasing on details of all kinds: about herself, about Mrs. Arnaud's relation with the late Iltyd, about the money she had lent her daughter (she never left *that* subject alone for above a quarter of an hour together), about the servants, about every kind of minute detail in the house. Always giving advice, offended when it was not taken, returning to the charge until it was, and then turning on her daughter for a poor, silly, dear thing, if the matter went wrong. There she was, an old woman of the sea, with but one fact about her which gave any hope of escape from her, and that was her rheumatism.

It was after she had been there half of one day that this great fact about her was discovered. Heloise remembered it first, and, with her brilliant genius, saw hope.

Madame on the very first day showed the weak point in her armour, and, as we said before, Heloise, knowing her well, had hope. Madame was partly agreeable on the first day, but Heloise knew that she could be so, for her own purposes, after dinner; but knowing what would with ordinary luck. occur, she said nothing until Madame, who had been talking at her best, desired to go to bed, and asked where she was to sleep.

'You sleep at the top of the house, grandmamma,' said Heloise, promptly. 'I shall sleep in the same room now—I have moved up—a very nice one. You must be tired; shall I take you to bed?'

'At the top of the house?' said Madame, aghast. 'My dear Heloise, you know, as well as I do, that I cannot walk upstairs.'

'I do not know what is to be done then, grandmamma: unless you take aunt Arnaud's bed, and she sleeps in yours; that is to say, in the same room with myself.'

'I suppose that there is nothing else to be done,' said Madame. 'It is hard on a woman of my age, but I have always sacrificed myself to my children. I will sleep downstairs.'

The arrangement was most promptly made; Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise departed upstairs, leaving the old lady in full possession of the back-parlour and the bed-room adjoining. The Emperor of Russia calculated the effect of cold on the French army, but he had a long time to think about it. Heloise had but little time to think about her grandmamma's rheumatism, yet she utilized it in the most dexterous manner. She and her aunt were free at the top of the house, where no grandmamma could reach them.

Was it for better or for worse that that cunning

old Frenchwoman was isolated in the lower part of the house with Rachel? That is a question which will answer itself.

To go on with our narrative. The coming of the old Frenchwoman sent Heloise and Mrs. Arnaud upstairs, leaving her to get through the night in the best way she could. Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise encamped in the apartments immediately above George Drummond's, and found peace and freedom.

CHAPTER XII.

BARRI.

MADAME never guessed what she had done on the very first day of her coming, by her temper and her rheumatism. She drove Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise into the third story. Heloise had seen this from the first, and had devotedly removed her own bed there, but she had held her tongue about her grandmamma's rheumatism, just to avoid discussion. She had also mentioned the third story, generally, as a 'bed-room,' whereas it was an excellent suite of rooms, slightly lower from floor to ceiling than the two other floors, but most comfortable in every way, as the late tenant, Major Chutney, knew full well. Madame, however, had the intense pleasure of believing that her daughter and grand-daughter were sleeping in an attic under the tiles.

The rooms were most excellently furnished, and so high over the street that the noise, such as there was in Hartley Street, was almost inaudible. Mrs. Arnaud and Heloise made themselves com-

pletely comfortable, and although meals were eaten in the back parlour downstairs, under the superintendence of Madame, who grumbled persistently at Rachel's cooking, still, more went on upstairs than ever she knew about. People desiring to see Mrs. Arnaud privately had only to knock at the private door, be let in by Rachel, and ascend to the sanctum at once.

Barri, the son of Lord Rhyader, was one of the first visitors. Heloise, one morning, taking rest from the business and her grandmamma, was reading in the sitting-room, when Rachel announced Mr. Drummond and the young gentleman. Heloise rose, and saw George Drummond for the first time. He seemed in an instant startled and confused. She was woman, and Frenchwoman enough to know that it was at her own beauty. She liked it, and, what is more, she liked him. By his side was a handsome boy whom she did not know.

'I beg pardon, Mademoiselle, but Lord Rhyader asked me to convey my young friend here to see Mrs. Arnaud. Mr. Barri Arnaud—Mademoiselle Heloise.'

'As if,' Barri said, with his hands in his breeches pockets and his hat under his left arm, 'a fellow of fourteen at Eton couldn't find the way for himself, without having the way shown him by a clerk in the Home Office, and that clerk George Drum-

mond. I assure you, Mademoiselle, that this man is a lunatic.'

'Barri,' said George Drummond, 'I will give you something that you will remember, directly.'

'All right, my boy. I shan't resist. I will wait until I am big enough, and then I will give it back.'

'Well, then, don't be impertinent, child.'

'Child, yes, I am a mere child, am I not, Mademoiselle?'

'Certainly, Monsieur, and I am fond of children.'

'Then just give me a kiss, if you please,' said Barri, and he at once took one. 'What would you have given for that?' he said to George.

Heloise was not in the least degree disconcerted. She laughed at George Drummond, keeping her hand on Barri's shoulder. 'He is to come here often, I hear,' she said. 'Shall you always come with him?'

'Certainly, if it gives me the pleasure I have now.'

'It is entirely mutual,' she replied; 'you will sit down until my aunt comes up. I have not met you before, and so I could never thank you for your great kindness to my aunt the first night she came here. Believe me, Mr. Drummond, that my aunt is a woman that requires the most delicate kindness, and those who show it to her shall have all that I can give them—my thanks.'

'There is no such woman in the world as Mary Arnaud,' said Barri; 'by Jove, here she is!' and the next moment he had his arms round her neck.'

She looked as handsome as ever, and sank down in her easy chair with the same exquisite grace. 'I am so glad,' she said, 'that Barri has caused this new introduction between us, Mr. Drummond; though, indeed, I might have claimed your acquaintance after the first night we met, but I waited for you to move in what I hope may be a lasting acquaintance. Your father,' she continued, drawing Barri to her and stroking his hair, 'was very kind to me once, before I retired from the world. Until I left that retirement and saw him again, I was unaware that he had a son. Lord Festiniog and Lord Rhyader speak of you in such high terms that I shall be proud to know you, not as a lodger, but as a friend. Come and see us as often as you can; I am sure my niece will be glad to see you.'

'Assuredly, Monsieur will be welcome, both for his own kindness to you, and for his father's.'

'The fact is,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'that my mother, Madame Mantalent, occupies the ground floor, and assists me, not only with capital, but with what is far better, her experience and taste. She, however, is old, and dislikes visitors, so I can better receive my friends here.'

'She dislikes visitors so much,' said Barri, 'that she raises Cain because nobody ever comes to see her. I must go down and pay my respects before I come up again.'

'You had better not,' said Mrs. Arnaud; but youth is rash, and he was gone.

George Drummond took his leave after twenty minutes' conversation, during which he explained that Barri and he had an old friendship, arising out of a stay which he had once made at Festiniog. But the deed was done; he had entered that room an ambitious, careful, heart-whole man, with a dozen projects in his head for raising himself in the world. He left it with the same number of projects, but they were all now for another. His thoughts about his own future had passed away, except in so far as he might make a glorious future for Heloise.

Did she know it? Did she know that the man was walking and breathing in a different atmosphere to that in which he had existed half-an-hour ago? We think that she did.

He was a young man whom any one would have been proud of loving; she could have loved him herself, had she not loved some one else. The most unfortunate fact was, that she had got into an awful entanglement elsewhere, and that she had told Mrs. Arnaud such a Mississippi of lies at first,

that she could now neither ask for her sympathy or advice, when she most needed them. She very nearly made a vow never to tell another story in her life, or only a certain number a day; but when she saw how perfectly futile such a resolution would be, she gave up the idea; for the little lady had, at least, this merit, that she knew her own character perfectly, and that though she deceived other people, she never deceived herself.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAMILY CONSULTATION.

LORD FESTINIOG, Lord Rhyader, Lady Rhyader, Mr. Drummond, and Mr. George Drummond sat down to dinner together: it was a family party, and more than one of them knew perfectly well that family affairs, and those only, were to be discussed.

Never having been in the ministry ourselves, we are unable to say what goes on at a meeting of cabinet ministers. We should be inclined to think that every one was either silent, or talked on indifferent matters, until the chief gave the key-note. Then, we should conceive, might follow a long and, sometimes, acrimonious argument, after the making up of which, her Majesty was advised. We know nothing about the matter, we only guess.

Every one present at Lord Festiniog's table knew perfectly well that Mrs. Arnaud and her relations were to be the subject of conversation. The gentle, and now middle-aged, Lady Rhyader

knew the fact so well that she never offered to go away when the dessert was set on and the servants had withdrawn. She, in fact, relieved them all from the difficulty of beginning, by plunging *in medias res.*

'Now that we are alone together, Lord Festiniog,' she said,—'for I do not mind Mr. George Drummond—I wish to have a few words with you about Mrs. Arnaud.'

'And why not?' said Lord Festiniog.

'That is no answer, sir. I want to know what you are going to do about her.'

'I have acknowledged her as my daughter-in-law, and we ought to have her here.'

'So I think. You have gone to such astounding lengths in this matter that you ought to go further; we ought not to do things by halves.'

'Here's a woman for you,' said Lord Festiniog, 'has had the best dinner that money could buy, and then breaks out like this. What is the matter with you, Alice?'

'Never you mind, sir. You give me a fair answer to a fair question, and don't be diplomatic with *me.* I want to know what you are going to do about Mary?'

'Oh! I see what you mean. You want me to tell the truth.'

'Exactly,' said Lady Rhyader.

'Well, then, I will do anything you choose to propose.'

'And so on,' said Lady Rhyader. 'Then you will ask her here.'

'Certainly. She was always, as it were, one of the family when we were alone. No one knew but that she was some poor relation.'

'And her mother and niece?'

'Of course. I will do anything which I am asked to do, if I am asked civilly.'

'Well, then, I must civilly ask you not to have her mother and niece here. Do you understand?'

'Why?'

'I am mistress of this house, and I refuse to answer you. I will receive Mrs. Arnaud, but neither her mother nor her niece.'

'May I not plead for the niece, Madam?' said George Drummond.

She rose and looked full at him; then they all rose as she went upstairs. George Drummond was nearest the door and opened it for her. As she passed him she said three words only to him in a low tone, and then passed out.

A moment after a footman came in and whispered to George Drummond. He went out. Lady Rhyader was standing on the staircase waiting for him.

'Mr. George Drummond,' she said, hurriedly, 'are you in love with that girl?'

'Yes.'

'Then I will say no more. Is your decision irrevocable?'

'I fear so.'

'Then God help you, my poor boy,' and so she left him.

When he came back to the dining-room it was obvious that they had been saying something in his absence. They had evidently been talking about him, and as he did not want to stop their conversation, he made a pretence of finishing a glass of wine, and went upstairs to Lady Rhyader. We will remain in the dining-room for the present.

'Drummond,' said Lord Festiniog, 'have you been to see the widow lately?'

'No, my lord. I do not think that she wishes to see me.'

'Want of taste on her part,' said Lord Festiniog, 'for you are a handsome and agreeable fellow still, Drummond.'

'If you flatter me, Lord Festiniog, I shall begin to be disagreeable.'

'Don't lose your temper, Drummond, that was always your fault, as it was the fault of your father before you.'

'Well, you know that I cannot have much wish to see her. Our relations in old times were extremely painful.'

'True,' said Lord Festiniog, 'what a singular thing it is that she should settle in the very house where your son was lodging.'

'Well, that was my doing,' said Drummond. 'I sent her there.'

'That you might go and see her sometimes, eh?' said Lord Festiniog.

'No. I have no wish to see her until she asks me, and that is not likely.'

'Don't say anything more about that, father,' said Lord Rhyader. 'Is she likely to do well in this business, Drummond?'

'Yes. She will probably make her fortune; were it not so, I should not have sent her there.'

'Who on earth could it have been,' said Lord Festiniog, 'who put her first on the truth about her being really married?'

'Her mother, doubtless,' said Drummond, looking Lord Festiniog straight in the face.

'It most certainly was not the old lady, I should say,' said Lord Rhyader. 'At least, I do not think that it could have been. She never cared twopence about the matter; she thought that she had done her duty as a mother by pitching her daughter overboard. I saw her in Paris a year ago, and she was most affectionate to me. She did not harbour any ill-will to her daughter, but extremely lamented her loss to the business. I don't think that the old

woman would have made or meddled in the matter. It must have been her brother who urged the rest of the family not to receive her.'

'That is rather a lame conclusion, is it not?' said Drummond, who knew fifty times more about the matter than Rhyader.

'Possibly, but such is my instinct.'

'Ay, but instincts are not business,' said Drummond. 'By-the-bye, talking of business, you have written to me to raise five hundred pounds for you. But you don't tell me on what security: is it on post obit or what?'

The sum was really 5,000*l.*, but Drummond withheld that fact: he wanted to hold the whip hand of Lord Rhyader, and he thought that this was the best way of doing so. He was completely mistaken in his tactics, and liked father and son none the better for the fact.

'You want money!' said Lord Festiniog, laughing. 'What *have* you been doing? A saint like you in the money market: that is too good. Come, pass the wine and tell us all about it. This is the best thing I have heard for some time.'

'Well, sir, the fact is that I made a very foolish speculation. I am an avaricious man, and I put five thousand pounds in the Gulf Stream Company, believing that there was a subsidy. There is none, and I have lost my money: that is all.'

'Why did not you come to me instead of going to Drummond? Don't let us pay it, Rhyader, my boy. Let us see if we can dispute it in law. Drummond, just see if we have any chance, and Rhyader and I will fight it. Or, if you hate publicity, Gervase, of course I will pay it; but I ask you, as a favour, to let Drummond get counsel's opinion. A lawsuit would be immense fun.'

'I am bound both by gratitude, and by duty to follow your directions, sir,' said Rhyader.

'Then hey! for a good lawsuit, I say. I will find the sinews of war, and Drummond shall find the talent. Now, let us go up to your wife and George Drummond: he is no bottle breaker. You should tell him to take wine in moderation, Drummond, or he being unused to it might get overtaken by it.'

'He has a will of his own in all matters, Lord Festiniog,' was all that Drummond said.

They went upstairs. Lady Rhyader was ready with coffee, but George Drummond had disappeared. Lady Rhyader, in answer to their inquiries, said that he had a bad headache, and was gone home. They thought nothing about the matter.

'Where is Barri?' said Lord Festiniog. 'He was not at dessert, and he is not here.'

'He is at Mrs. Arnaud's, I believe. Mr. George Drummond left him there, and said that he would walk home with him. The boy wants a balloon, to let up with the gas, and Mrs. Arnaud's footman told him that he could tell him where to get one. He will be home soon.'

'He is pretty familiar at Mrs. Arnaud's already,' said Lord Festiniog.

'Oh, yes, he is there nearly every day. She treats him as if he were her own son. The boy is tiresome at home and I like his going there. He has a fancy for doing so, and I do not see why he should not.'

CHAPTER XIV.

DRUMMOND THE ELDER.

DRUMMOND left Lord Festiniog's very early, and on getting to his study, was extremely surprised to find his son there with his head buried in his hands before the fire. He at once saw that something was wrong, and he approached George Drummond and put his hand on his shoulder.

'What is the matter, my boy?' he asked. 'What has Lady Rhyader said which has given you a headache?'

'Now, you save me the trouble of coming to the point,' said George Drummond. 'She has been saying things which I do not understand.'

Well, tell me what she has said; if you cannot trust me, who can you trust?'

'Ay! but she says that you are the last man to be trusted; what am I to do if she says that again?'

'Tell her that she lies,' said Drummond, very quietly. 'No, you can't do that. But what has she been saying about me?'

'Well, I hardly like to tell you, father. We got in hot dispute over a certain matter, and lost our tempers. Then she said that you were the person who had put Mrs. Arnaud in possession of the facts of her marriage, and that you had set her on Lord Festiniog.'

'She is a clever little woman,' said Drummond, with an expression of admiration. 'She is perfectly right.'

'Father, did you do that?'

'Certainly, my son. You inherit all my property, and I have no idea of your marrying into a family with the curse of illegitimacy on it. You will marry Heloise, I suppose; at least, from what the boy Barri tells me, I should think it probable. If you decide on her, I wish her to be received into society. Barri tells me that you are *au mieux* with her, go on and prosper.'

The transparency of this falsehood never struck George Drummond. He could not possibly have known that George would ever see Heloise, when he told Mrs. Arnaud the truth; therefore, how could he have betrayed his client for such a purpose? George never saw that until afterwards.

'I am in love with her, I confess, father, but she will never marry me. Lady Rhyader told me all about it to-night; Heloise knew my fellow lodger,

D'Arcy, in Paris, most intimately. She has followed him here.'

'That is an outrageous untruth,' said Drummond. 'What else did Lady Rhyader say?'

'She said that the whole thing between them was notorious in Paris, and that Madame Mantalent had in reality only come over to bring him to book.'

'Now listen to me, George,' said the elder Drummond. 'Lady Rhyader is as incapable of telling lies intentionally as you are, but she believes them. All this story about D'Arcy is false, from beginning to end, by whom told I do not know. The whole thing is a fiction. I have got the key to it, but I don't know the whole truth. I will go and see the old woman to-morrow, and get it out of her. Now look here, boy, I have watched Mrs. Arnaud all her life, and I know everything about her and her relations. I tell you that there never was anything in the world between D'Arcy and Heloise. Will that satisfy you?'

'Well, no. I am afraid that there is something between them.'

'I will look into that for you. I fancy that you are wrong. I conceive that there is a confidence between them, but that it is about some other person I don't know. I will get it out of the old woman to-morrow.'

'What, Madame Mantalent?' said George; 'she is a difficult customer, I fancy.'

'Fiddle!' said Drummond; 'ask her how much money she owes me; she will cast her old wig on the fire.'

'Owe you money?'

'Yes, boy. Like all Frenchwomen, she speculated under the Empire, and I, having certain designs in hand, made friends with her, and lent certain sums to her. She has naturally not repaid them, though she could do so if she chose. I will just go to her to-morrow, and hear what she has to say. The threads of a very vast matter are in my hands, George; when I have got them together, I will use my power for your interest.'

'But, father, you are scheming about something. Pause, and think how happy we might be without any attempt to go higher in the world.'

'Who told you that I was scheming?'

'Your face. I know it well; you are hiding something from me.'

'I am.'

'Confide to me, father.'

'I cannot; I have committed a great crime, and I dare not tell you of it.'

'Why?'

'Because you would cast me away as the dir under your feet, if I told you.'

'Father! father! why should you say that to me? Of myself I say nothing. I have tried to do my duty by you, and you will allow that I have never failed in it.'

'Never for a moment,' said Drummond.

'As for your duty to me, what can I say about that? Why I have not words to express what I owe you. No man had ever such a father as you have been to me. Believe me, that I love and trust you beyond all living men, and that everything which you say to me is sacred. Le me share your sorrow or your crime; do not, after so many years of kindness, entirely repel me from your heart.'

'You are talking like a madman,' said Drummond, 'and you are driving me mad. I cannot say any more to-night. You shall marry the girl if money can do it, but I will not urge you to marry her if she loves some one else. Now, go home to Number Seventeen, look up Madame Mantalent, if she is not gone to bed, and tell her that I am coming to see her to-morrow. You may say that I want 1,500*l.* of her, and that will make her civil.'

'But, father,' said George Drummond, recurring to the very singular revelation which Mr. Drummond had made, 'won't you confide in me?'

Drummond looked at him pensively for a minute, and then said, 'I cannot do it, my boy. I cannot part with you, at least not yet.'

'But, father, I would go to the scaffold for you. Lay your hand on my heart, and see how true it beats.'

'Go away, old boy.'

'Father, I would almost give up Heloise for your sake.'

'No, by no means. You must know nothing. I have an object to gain, and then—'

'And what then?'

'Would you do anything which I asked you?'

'Why, of course I would.'

'Murder?'

'Why no,' said George Drummond, laughing. 'But I would do anything to oblige you. Well, now, I will really go; I shall bring you to confidence same day'; and he went.

Drummond the elder sat over the fire, and thought deeply, but without any result. Undecided in purpose he had always been: he was never more so than now, when he held the cards in his hands, or at least thought that he did so.

He never had been married, save once for a very short time. He had lived with more than one woman for a time, but he had never loved one of them; the only woman he had ever cared for in his life was Mrs. Arnaud; and she seemed as far away from him as ever. In fact, she seemed to get a growing dislike to him. He had asked himself

often why this was, and now he began to see the answer.

She was a woman of singular loyalty and truthfulness in *her* way; although she had a latent genius for fiction, scarcely inferior to that of Heloise, which she only used when required by extreme necessity; and she could not trust him.

It was he that had made love to her during the time that he was married. It was he who, for the sake of putting her under an obligation, had found out the fact of her having been married. He had betrayed Lord Festiniog in doing this, and had been false to him about it since. But he had got no nearer to Mrs. Arnaud's heart. She despised him for the treachery which had benefited her.

His affection for George Drummond was singularly strong. A lonely man all his life, George Drummond, with his innocence and talent, both as boy and as man, had been a great pleasure to him. He wanted to do that young man a great service, and himself a greater. He wished to marry Mrs. Arnaud, even though she hated him. It seems strange, but it was so; we see the thing every day if we look for it. His last chance for gaining his object was in George Drummond—and in murder. It is no use disguising the fact. A certain life, as he thought, stood between him and his object; and that life must go. There was no actual neces-

sity for it, but a secret which will leak out soon about him will account for his folly. He could never think on a certain subject consecutively.

Yet in most things he was a respectable man. He had an excellent practice and a most excellent income. He had more business than he knew how to get through with; yet it was observed, by those *who* cared about his affairs, that he had not made his son a lawyer but a gentleman, as if the two things were totally incompatible, which, we are happy to say, is not the case. He had not used his son's great talents by educating him for the law, and taking him into practice. He had other designs for him, and his business friends thought him a fool, for George Drummond could have made the business twice what it was. 'Why, then, was he kicking his heels at the Home Office?' they asked.

His father desired no confidant in his business; it is the oldest story in the world. One man was mad about one woman, and there was a wild and ever-fading chance of her, through carefully-planned assassination.

'If I fail in that,' he said, 'I will kill her, and then myself. I am not sure that I had better do both those things this very night. I would do it, only I have some lingering superstition about the next world. However, the cub shall go; that will pave the way.

'How on earth shall I ever get into the household? There will be the difficulty. If I could only get them to Italy I could do it, or rather she could; but there is no chance of it.'

The dexterous, keen-headed lawyer was left without any power of decision whatever.

Murder 'tirled at the pin,' but the murder must be done by another hand; and there was only one which he could command. It never struck the man that wealth, honour, and virtue would be in the end too strong for him. Least of all did it strike him that Nature would in this case invade civilization, and solve the matter in her own peculiar way.

Let him disappear for the present, ready for any mischief, but not quite sure of his means. Charged with 100 lb. of compressed gun cotton, let us leave him to go off under the bottom of that very safe ship the 'Festiniog.'

CHAPTER XV.

MOVEMENTS AT NUMBER SEVENTEEN.

THE pleasant and almost whimsical life of Mrs. Arnaud went on. She had seen trouble, and serious trouble, nay, had been close upon tragedy. Now, however, her ship was sailing with a perfectly fair wind in a tolerably smooth sea. If any one had told her of great danger, she would have smiled; had any one told her that the quiet, middle-aged lawyer Drummond was prepared to blow her and others into the air, she would have laughed.

There was a great attraction towards Number Seventeen, to all the people we have mentioned. Barri began to discover that he was one of the most popular persons in the establishment. Mrs. Arnaud had always been fond of him. Heloise liked him because he was impudent and handsome, and because she could get anything out of him which she chose. Rachel liked everything young, and so liked him. The maid liked him because he

made love to her, and the footman liked him because he was told off to take him to toy shops, and so escaped much of his duty. Toy shops we said; say rather the theatres at the morning performance and the Crystal Palace itself. Barri and Mrs. Arnaud's young footman saw a great deal of life together.

Not that Barri was ever out after dark. Lady Rhyader was very particular on that subject, as was also Mrs. Arnaud. The heir to a vast fortune was not to be trifled with, more particularly, because in case of anything happening to the boy Barri, there was no possible heir, and the title was extinct. The boy was treated by all as though he was a moss rose done up in silver paper. And he knew his value too; his father and mother Rhyader, were answerable for that.

He was a very good little fellow, affectionate, shrewd beyond belief, but over-grown and not over-strong. He seemed to take mostly to George Drummond, Mrs. Arnaud and Madame Mantalent; and one charming fact about Barri was, that he always carefully repeated in one society what he had heard in another.

'How do you do, Madame Mantalent?' he would say, dashing into the back-parlour, the same room in which Mrs. Arnaud had undergone her penance on the first night of her arrival.

And 'Comment vous portez-vous, petit vaurien?' would madame reply.

'You are not polite, madame,' replied Barri. 'What a pity it is that your rheumatism does not allow you to go upstairs.'

'Why, monsieur?'

'There is better fun upstairs than there is down here. I say, Madame Mantalent.'

'Well.'

'Is Heloise going to marry D'Arcy or George? Because she seems to be setting her cap at both. Grandpa says that Mrs. Arnaud will ultimately marry Mr. Drummond. Now a woman with such a noble wig as yours ought to have some sense under it. If I was in your place I should set them all right.'

So the boy went away, and the old woman prepared to make herself disagreeable to Lord Festiniog. She wrote him a letter which she knew would bring him, and began packing for a journey to Paris.

He arrived at the most busy time of the afternoon; he was uncertain as to which way he had better get at her, and like many people who deliberate, he took the most foolish course. He went into the shop.

He had no time to ask for her. She bore down on him full sail, threw her arms round his neck,

kissed him, and addressed him in the most friendly and affectionate terms before every one; then with an enormous amount of loudly-expressed anxiety, she swept him into the parlour, leaving the whole affair to be talked of all over London for the next week, and find what solution it could.

She had succeeded in her object of publicly annoying him; now she took a turn at him in private. If the unhappy nobleman had anything to say for himself, she gave him no time to say it. She had called him there by a letter which urged private matters of the highest interest as the object of the interview. The private and confidential matter was that Mrs. Arnaud's footman was teaching Barri to drink, and that she as a mother could not depart for Paris without telling his lordship of the state of the case. Her daughter, she said, was a fool and a most ungrateful fool, as silly and weak now as she was when she married that brigand-looking son of his, Iltyd. (She had never seen him, and he was of a singularly frank and pleasing aspect.) Next, she said that she was going to Paris because she could not stay any longer in a house where such things went on, as were going on upstairs. D'Arcy and George Drummond were both in love with Heloise, and her ingrate of a daughter favoured George Drummond, while Heloise herself was attached to D'Arcy. So

she scolded on, and in the course of time came to George Drummond's father. The son, according to her, was a disreputable spendthrift, but he was a saint to Drummond himself. She had been forced to borrow money of him in consequence of the ruin brought on her by her daughter's alliance with his family, and what interest she paid on it she declined to tell; his lordship would not believe it if she did. (As she did not pay any interest at all, and as Drummond had no earthly security for it, Lord Festiniog would have been extremely surprised had he known that such a shrewd person as Drummond had let her have it on such terms, even though he did happen to admire her daughter.)

Now, all this affected Lord Festiniog very slightly, he trusted Mary Arnaud, George, and the boy perfectly well, though he had not yet made any great acquaintance with George, whom Rhyader still disliked. The old woman, whose object was simply to make every one uncomfortable, through the head of the family, saw this, and shot her last bolt, which hit.

She said that she had the greatest dislike to betray her own daughter, but that she would never see a viper plotting against Lord Festiniog's peace of mind, now that he had done justice to her old, and hitherto respectable family. Then she finally, and beyond doubt, proved to him what she knew

was the truth, that Drummond was a traitor to him, that it was he who had told Mrs. Arnaud of the legality of her marriage.

'Can you prove that, madame?' said he.

'Tax *him* with it; or, stay milord, tax *her* with it, and see what answer either of them dares to give.'

'I am very much obliged to you for your information, madame, which I am sure is given with the best intentions. May I ask you the favour of the loan of one of your rings?'

Madame made the *emprunt* with the greatest alacrity, and was so eager to get the ring off, that in the struggle she gave herself a muscular strain in the back: the effect of this was, that she accompanied the presentation of the ring by a wild and dismal howl, such as only rheumatism can produce.

The unpitying and brutal insular old booby (that was what she called him to herself) took no notice of her yell, and departed with the ring, returning almost immediately with another in addition, of which he begged her acceptance. As, next to dress and mischief-making, she liked jewellery better than anything else in the world, she would have risen and embraced Lord Festiniog, but she was afraid of another rick in her back; because she knew that when one came, another was pretty sure to follow,

and it would not have done for her to have given a war-whoop just as she was kissing him. She therefore gave him her benediction and put on her ring, after which they parted with mutual satisfaction, and saw one another no more in this world.

Lord Festiniog ascertained from Heloise that Mrs. Arnaud was upstairs alone. He went up by himself, and found her sitting by the window resting. When she saw him she came towards him with her old, frank, pleasant smile. He was half disarmed before he opened his mouth, but she saw that there was a cloud on his face, and she took his hands and looked wonderingly into it.

'Mary,' he said, 'have you always been frank with me?'

'Yes,' she said, with a pause; 'I think so.'

'Who was it who told you of your marriage, and set you on me?'

'Oh! you have found *that* out,' she said. 'Well—I am not at all sure that I am sorry. I do not ask you who told you, only you can bear me out that I did not. I bound myself in honour to him, and even now his name is not mentioned.'

'Nor shall it be,' said he: 'do you trust him?'

'No! He put me in possession of the fact in hopes that I would marry him. I need not say what answer I gave.'

'Do you think he has some scheme in hand still, of which you are the object?'

'I fancy so, but I cannot tell what it is. He has two pair of eyes on him now, however, yours and mine. Sit down, and let us talk a little more. You have been with my mother; what sort of a character has she given me?'

'The character of a poor, weak saint, surrounded on all sides by harpies and villains. Your footman, I gather, is teaching Barri to drink; your lodgers are quarrelling about your niece; I forget the rest.'

'What a shame! The young man is an excellent young man, and as for my lodgers quarrelling about Heloise, they are very good friends, and I hope will remain so. I admit them both, certainly, D'Arcy because he knew Heloise in Paris, and George Drummond because he is here with Barri, who thinks him the best of created beings, after his own family, of course.'

'Are either of them *épris* with Heloise?

'I fancy both of them, to a certain extent. But you must remember that I should be the last person to see to what extent. Before me, of course, there is nothing but politeness.'

'What do you think of George Drummond?' said Lord Festinio.

'I like him amazingly, now. I did not care

much for him at first; his manner is cold, but when the crust of him is got through, you will not find a more affectionate or warm-hearted fellow anywhere. I wish you would see more of him. He is such an admirable companion for Barri, and the boy takes to him.'

'Barri and he are old friends, and I will see more of him. But Rhyader says that he is such a prig.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'Gervase ought to know better about that matter than I can pretend to do, for he is the king of prigs himself. I cannot say that I find George Drummond to be anything of the sort. I should pass *him* as a gentleman.'

'Would you pass Rhyader as one, Mary?'

'Well—h'm—yes, I suppose so. Much as I would pass you. I think Rhyader, by his birth and position, fancies that he can take liberties which would not be allowed to other people. You do it yourself, you know, and it is not to be tolerated.'

'Well, Mary, I will not do it any more: let us be friends.'

'By all means. I desire nothing more. I thought we were, for we have gone through much together with only one quarrel. Surely we are friends. But stay a moment before you go. Are

you aware that Rhyader and his wife distrust Drummond?'

'I have a suspicion of it, but I do not like to talk about it—it causes words. He is a good man of business, and I do not wish to part with him. He was shamefully served by his wife, but I fear he has served one woman, at least, very badly. Did you ever hear of a woman called Perrot?'

'No. Stay! My servant at Leghorn and at Ravenna married a Frenchman called Perrot. I wonder if it is the same woman.'

'It does not matter much,' said Lord Festiniog. 'She was dunning me for money, saying that she knew something. I sent her to Drummond as my legal adviser. Since then she has been very quiet; and Drummond has confessed to me that he was in intimate relations with her at one time.'

'So he was,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'She was my maid. I should like to see her again. She was with me when my poor child died. She was with me during the whole of that horrible fever at Ravenna. I really should like to see the woman.'

'Well, it is possible that you may, if she ever wants any money,' said Lord Festiniog. 'What do you say to my going?'

'You may go if you like, but I would much rather that you stayed. Stay ten minutes, will you?'

'Why, yes. The sight of your honest, handsome face would make me stay any time.'

'Quite so; and we will consider the rest understood. I want you to see a face more pleasant than mine.'

'That of Heloise?'

'I do not say no to that. But the face I wish you to see just now is of another kind. It is familiar to you, and yet you seem scarcely to know it.'

'Who is it?'

'George Drummond. He is downstairs; let me fetch him, and leave you to talk to him.'

'I have no objection; but with what object?'

'I wish to bring you together; that is all.'

'Let him come if you like,' he replied; and she went. George Drummond was not long in coming.

'Well, George,' said Lord Festiniog, 'that mysterious Mrs. Arnaud says that she wants me to see more of you. I suppose I must, for she always has her own way.'

'I shall only be too happy to see as much of your lordship as you choose,' said George, 'for one reason, if for no other.'

'And that?'

'And that is, that I have a very great affection for Barri Arnaud, and I think that I have more

influence over him than any one else—an influence which I need not tell you I should use for good. The boy has high purposes, which it does not seem to me any of his family understand. He is a petulant, spoilt boy, but with a great deal of good in him. I wish that I was his tutor; in fact, I wish that I was anything but what I am; and if I might see more of the boy, I might prevent his life from being ruined as mine has been; nay, I could not do that, but he would be a companion to me in my unutterable desolation.'

'But, *George Drummond*,' said Lord Festiniog, 'what is the use of talking in this manner? There is not a young man in England with finer prospects. Your father is rich; you are an only son; he tells me the scheme he has thought out so shrewdly for your future. He says that you have accepted that future, and have great ambition; there is nothing to prevent your being an ambassador, or, if you choose to spend your cash in that way, a member of parliament.'

'A month ago, my lord, I had high purposes: now I have simply none.'

'Ah!' said Lord Festiniog: 'I see. Mademoiselle Heloise has been asked if she will share your future, and prefers a military life:—is that it?'

'No, I have not spoken to her, as I know

it would be hopeless. I have seen too much.'

'Well, perhaps she does like some one else better—that cannot be helped, can it?'

'No, but life is valueless to me.'

'Well,' said Lord Festiniog, 'if any one had told me this, I would certainly not have believed it. A sensible young fellow like you to talk this to me. Why, man, you have scarcely seen her a month, and you can't be so hard hit as all this comes to. I have been ten times worse off than ever you have. You will get over it, man (*I* have, twice), and wonder why you were ever such a fool.'

George Drummond politely declined to allow the possibility of his ever getting over it, or of his ever putting faith in woman again.

'Then there is something you do not choose to tell me about,' said Lord Festiniog.

George Drummond was obliged to confess that there was.

'Then I will ask no more questions. I am sorry for you. If you like to make love to Barri to console yourself, I will use my influence in your favour. Rhyader does not like you as he ought to, yet, but he soon will if I abuse you to him; the heir to the throne is always in opposition you know. Lady Rhyader, I think, is as fond of you as she is of any one: the Ormerods are never demon-

strative. If you repeat carefully everything which we say against one another behind each other's backs you will soon be the most trusted friend in the family circle. Well, good-bye, don't be downhearted. Come whenever you like. I think that I shall make sure of a warm welcome for you.'

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERY OF D'ARCY AND HELOISE.

THERE was something more about Heloise than George Drummond had chosen to tell Lord Festiniog. A very black suspicion about her had been unfortunately confirmed beyond all manner of doubt, in his mind, and he did not care whether he lived or died. We have a hesitation in explaining what the matter was, yet we must do so, or the reader will be as much puzzled as George Drummond was; and what is worse, will think that there is something wrong, something which should not be told, in the most innocent and romantic business in the world.

D'Arcy had met in London, and very much admired, a certain young lady of very high birth and fortune. He thought that he was very much in love with her, and he followed her to Paris. She liked him well enough, but there was but little chance of her family consenting to her marriage with a comparatively poor man like D'Arcy.

Still, opposition only made them like one another more, and they came to a clandestine correspondence.

Heloise was at this time in Brittany. The young lady was so closely watched by her friends, that correspondence was difficult. But a French friend in whom D'Arcy confided, informed him of what was pretty well known elsewhere: namely, that Madame Mantalent of the Rue St. Honoré, had for many years managed affairs of that kind for her customers, and charged for her services proportionately in her bill.

'She will not undertake an affair, you know,' said his French friend. 'The old woman is a dragon of virtue. But for an honourable matter like yours, she is the most convenient and sensible person in Paris, which is the same thing as saying in the universe. Still you must pay, my child, and you say that you are not rich.'

'Oh! I am tolerably well off,' said D'Arcy: 'but how do you manage with the old woman?'

'Let me look at your pocket-handkerchief,' said his French friend. 'Bah!' he said, 'this is not in the fashion at all: I would not ask my valet to dust his boots with it. You must have a new set, and, like all the world, have them embroidered at the corner with your monogram. All the world does it, and Madame Mantalent has a *spécialité* for

such work: they will cost you thirty-five francs a-piece, but you must pay to win.'

'Good, and what next?' said D'Arcy.

'Why, you get into discussion with Madame, you pay beforehand, and give her one of your own handkerchiefs for a pattern: in that handkerchief is the letter you wish forwarded. It will reach its destination.'

'How?'

'Faith, how am I to say? It is her business, not mine. She gets her share out of the young lady, also. She gets much expensive custom in this way, that is all I know. Only, mind that you never make an appointment to meet the young lady, or she will denounce you at once.'

'But how does she know what there is in the letters she passes on?'

'How does she know?' said the Frenchman, contemptuously. 'Do you suppose that she does not read every word of them before she sends them? Why, if anything wrong were discovered with her hand in it, it would ruin her, easy-going as we are in Paris.'

D'Arcy's expensive friendship with Madame Mantalent was begun in this way. His suit did not very greatly prosper, for he never had the chance of meeting the young lady in private, and, warned by his friend's experience, he never dared

to hint at such a thing in a letter. His acquaintance with Madame became more expensive after a short time, for Heloise returned from Brittany, and he was thrown against her in the course of business.

From that moment the young lady was forgotten. He grew cool with a rapidity for which even she could not account; but in reality she was not broken-hearted as she had seen some one who was much richer, and whom she liked better. D'Arcy's affections had been transferred to Heloise, and in talking to her about his passion for the young lady for whom he cared no longer, he got into the most confidential relations with her.

What should have made her love him so suddenly? Who can say? There was not much in the man; he was handsome and agreeable; he talked French well; he dressed well. He was only an Englishman after all: yet there was a *je ne sais quoi* about him which made him more attractive to her than any other man she had ever seen. She had plenty of young Frenchmen who paid her attention, and who were better dressed and better mannered than he was. Yet she chose him from among them all. For his wealth? no: he was not singularly rich. For his beauty? why he had only the ordinary good looks of a well trained and bred Englishman. For his talents? he was not very

clever, he could hold his own and no more. She was stupid, save in her exquisite power of management, most half-educated Frenchwomen—we shall be getting into trouble—what we were going to say is that most half-educated women of all nations seem stupid, because they have no facts to reason from. She was stupid, we repeat; and he knew more than she did. On occasion he could tell her of things which had never been told her during her convent education. The young Frenchmen who had paid her attention could make themselves more agreeable than D'Arcy ever did. Yet there was the *je ne sais quoi* about him—and—she fell in love with him.

He came and went for some time. Her time with her grandmother was not a pleasant one. She was a woman of business, and she calculated D'Arcy's affairs. They were sufficient for her, and in the end he asked her to be affianced to him: she consented.

At about this time, her aunt Arnaud, who was seldom spoken of in the family, began the fight with Lord Festiniog, which ended in her recognition. Madame Mantalent at once took her daughter's part, as far as she could, though she could do little for her daughter save vituperation, which did Mrs. Arnaud no good at all. Even before Mrs. Arnaud was recognized, Madame

Mantalent on Heloise's proposition that she should go to England to help her aunt, gave her ready consent. It is no use repeating what we have hinted at previously.

But matters between D'Arcy and Heloise had gone very far. She told him that her aunt was taking such and such a house, that it was probable that she would be sent for to help in the business, and so on. D'Arcy went to London and took the lodgings. He came into them only a week before Mrs. Arnaud.

Her position was extremely difficult. The fact was that D'Arcy had married Heloise in Paris, and neither of them dared confess the fact to any human being. He dared not confess it to his family, nor she to hers. They were man and wife, however, according to all laws, human and divine.

She came with a smiling face to assist Mrs. Arnaud in the business. She assisted her in the noblest manner, and she sat, like a little Burgundian as she was, opposite Mrs. Arnaud day after day, and night after night, wondering when she would get the courage to tell the truth. Then, her grandmother came, and frightened her still more. And George Drummond came and fell in love with her, which made a complication which was beyond her powers to solve.

D'Arcy behaved very well. He began to wish

that the marriage should be known to his family, but she begged him, for a time, to say nothing about it, unless—certain contingencies should occur. He agreed to that; but in concealed marriages things are apt to be misunderstood by those not in the possession of the real facts.

George Drummond and D'Arcy had made a sort of friendship together. George had been the oldest lodger in the house, and, during the interregnum between Mrs. Morsey and Mrs. Arnaud, had naturally made acquaintance with him, as a newly arrived lodger. George had had no special information from his father about Mrs. Arnaud; such as he had he gave to D'Arcy. There was no need for two young men to talk about family affairs in any way. They neither of them had a *point d'appui*, they simply made friends. Mrs. Arnaud came, and they talked of her. Heloise came, Madame came, Lord Festiniog came and Barri. George Drummond and D'Arcy talked over them all in the most free and easy manner. More freely possibly after the advance of Madame sent them upstairs into Mrs. Arnaud's rooms, where George Drummond was free to meet Heloise, and D'Arcy was free to meet his wife.

George Drummond had determined for some little time to ask D'Arcy about his love for Heloise. He had delayed doing so because he

was afraid. He saw that they admired one another.

Yet it would be better surely to speak to him about it. He resolved to do so, and at ten o'clock one night he came down to D'Arcy's rooms, to speak about the matter.

D'Arcy was not in his sitting-room, but the door of his bed-room was open. There were two people talking and laughing there, one of them was D'Arcy, the other Heloise. D'Arcy was sitting in a chair, and Heloise was standing behind him, brushing his hair. George slid out of the room without making a sound.

Life was now of no value to him. Look at it for yourself, reader; conceive how unutterably horrible it would be in your own case, and think well of him. In some men such a thing would have produced brutality, ferocity: in him it only produced heroism; and, we think, heroism of the highest kind.

With D'Arcy and Heloise we will trouble you very little. We do not think that there is anything very much to trouble about with them. We only ask you to go forward with George Drummond.

CHAPTER XVII.

GEORGE DRUMMOND TAKES CHARGE OF BARRI.

ALL things, as the Scotch say, seemed to be put past him. He had never loved any woman but Heloise, and she—it was not to be borne, and yet it must be. That that frank, beautiful creature should be unfit to be named, was horrible. Yet, she was talking familiarly to his friend in his friend's bed-room. He had seen it with his own eyes; he saw it through the open door, against his will. She was in his bed-room, brushing his hair, late at night. French manners might be free, but never so free as that. To us, who know the truth, the matter is harmless enough, but to him it was unbearable.

He also heard her say to him, 'You have inked your cuff again, you very imbecile noodle; you lay your pen down on the desk, and then put your arm in the ink. You are incomparably foolish.'

So it was all over, as he told Lord Festiniog. It was necessary to shape out some new life for himself.

What career was there conceivable for him? What should he do now? He had partially failed at the university, and he had hopelessly failed in love. Could he trust a woman after his experience of Heloise? He thought not. He put women aside altogether, and thought, once more, of a career in life.

But for whom? As a totally unselfish person he could not decide.

He had got to be very fond of Mrs. Arnaud, but, when all was said and done, what was she? A handsome milliner, nothing more. Yet, sometimes, he remembered that she had ventured to kiss him, and that he liked her doing so. He rambled on in idle thought of this kind, and ended by wishing that he was king of England: under which circumstances he fancied that he could put all things right. Then he went to sleep, and was awakened late in the morning by Barri rousing him out of bed with Mrs. Arnaud's dog, and requesting to be taken to the Crystal Palace, dog and all.

He took Barri to the Crystal Palace, and they had a long day together. It was after this that he spoke to Lord Festiniog. That excellent old man gave him all the comfort in his power, but it was none. He moped and brooded by himself a great deal, dreading to meet either D'Arcy or Heloise, who seemed also to avoid him. As for Mrs. Arnaud,

though he liked her, and she liked him, he dared not be much with her after what he had discovered about her niece. The responsibility was too heavy. He made a certain discovery, also, without interchanging a word. That woman Rachel knew what was going on between D'Arcy and Heloise: she looked so guiltily at him. Yet, could *he* speak and warn Mrs. Arnaud? He was the very last man who could possibly do so.

The boy Barri had always taken very kindly to him, and now they got greater friends than ever. Lord Festiniog had said to George Drummond that he would abuse George to Rhyader, in order to make sure that that gentleman would get to like him in consequence. He did nothing of the kind, however, but praised George so steadily that Lord and Lady Rhyader saw much more of him, and got to appreciate him.

He was very much with them after a short time. The truth which he supposed that he knew about Heloise drove him from Number Seventeen almost entirely, and he found in his new friends, who had been old acquaintances, people much more kindly and agreeable than he had ever thought. He never mentioned his terrible disappointment, but Lord Festiniog hinted enough about it to make them pity him, and to render them very kind to him.

He seemed to make a home at Festiniog House;

and his father approved of his doing so. Drummond said that George would get into good society, might make a man of the world, might make useful friends—might, in fact, do everything except what he, Drummond, wished to be done.

What was that? Time only can tell.

George saw his father frequently; and the more he saw of him, the more he was puzzled. His father, Drummond, who had always been frank and kind to him, now became a perfect sphinx. He tried to talk to him about strange things; things which George had never heard of before. He said something so very odd one day that George came to the conclusion that his father was getting a little mad, and that he could not trust him.

It was a curious thing for a son to do about his father, but he did it. He consulted Lord Festiniog. He asked that gentleman if he could tell him anything about his grandfather.

Lord Festiniog was very loath to say anything at first, and wished to change the subject. But George Drummond stuck to his point, and at last Lord Festiniog told him the truth.

'My dear young friend,' he said. 'Providence afflicts in various ways. You ask about your grandather. Will you ask about mine?'

'No, my lord.'

'Very well, then, I suppose I must tell you about

both of them. My grandfather was a hopeless criminal, a man who, in these purer times, is never named. Yours, my poor boy, was a lunatic, and died in Bedlam.'

'Have you ever, my lord, seen any symptoms of lunacy in my father?'

'*No*,' said Lord Festiniog. 'Madness misses a generation. It is your turn, not his.'

'I think that my turn has come, for there are matters which I cannot understand.'

'There is no doubt about that,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I should conceive that you were as mad as a hatter. I am not excessively sane, myself; in fact, I fancy that I am going mad. Do not you think that a little change would be good for you? it might keep off the disease, you know. What is it, after all? merely congenital tubercular disease of the brain; I expect that I have got it. Now, we will talk no more nonsense. What do you think of me, George?'

'I think of you—well, give me time—I think of you first as a kind patron.'

'Yes, but what more?'

'What more?' said George Drummond, 'that is a curious question. Do you mean personally?'

'Yes.'

'I think of you as a very excellent nobleman. As a Radical myself,' he said, smiling, 'I object to

noblemen theoretically, but I go as far as to say that I think that if all noblemen were like yourself, we should require no Reform Bills. But, then, you see they are not.'

'Quite so,' said Lord Festiniog, 'you will get over this Radicalism in time; if you do not, it will sit very pleasantly on you. Well, now, I see you trust me, and will do as I ask you. I want you to do something for me.'

'It is done, my lord.'

'No, it is not, George. It has to be done.'

'Mention it then.'

'Take away this boy Barri for us. Be his tutor. Get him entirely out of the way, and answer for his life with your own.'

'This is very puzzling, my lord.'

'Yes, as a matter of course it is puzzling,' said Lord Festiniog, 'you need hardly remark that. I want you to take away this boy, for a time, until I can see into matters.'

'What matters, my lord?'

'I really hardly know myself,' said he.

'I could not do anything without my father's consent, my lord.'

'Who asked you? I only ask you to take the boy away while I deal with the woman.'

'What woman?'

'I am coming to that: now I have been appealed

to by two young people to break a matter to you, and ask your confidence. You had reason to suspect that a flirtation was on between D'Arcy and Heloise.'

'How could you know that?'

'Rachel, the spy and confidant, saw you coming from D'Arcy's room on one occasion. She informed them of the fact, and, after considerable deliberation, they came to me as one having some weight, and asked me to break the truth to you. They were married in Paris four months ago.'

'Married! And does Mrs. Arnaud know?'

'Not a word. I am to have the inestimable privilege of telling her, when Mrs. D'Arcy overcomes her almost unreasonable repugnance to my doing so.'

'Well!' he said with a sigh, 'I am glad that she was honest. But, however, the sooner I am away, the better.'

'I am glad that you see that. She is a good young woman, of whom you should never think again. I don't exactly see, now, that I know all, what there is in her; but she drives the young fellows mad.'

'Well!'

'"Well," is not much to say to a man in my position. You should say, "Well, my lord," or, "I profoundly appreciate and esteem your lord-

ship's confidence," or, "You are an old noodle and are frightening yourself about nothing"; anything but "Well."'

'I don't know what you are driving at, my lord.'

'How, on earth, can I tell you if I do not know myself? I cannot confide to Rhyader and his wife, they would either laugh at me, or have a series of fits, or do something or another ridiculous. I want the boy taken away, and I want you to do it.'

'Is there any danger to him?'

'I think so. I have received anonymous letters which puzzle me. It seems a very strange thing for an old man like myself to tell you in broad daylight, in this most prosaic and, I might say, police-ridden town, London—but I fear that the boy's life is in danger.'

'That is very strange. My dear lord, you must have some reason for speaking. Is it not some scheme to extort money?'

'Why, apparently not; that is one of the puzzles of it; not a stiver of money has been demanded of me. I am only warned that the boy's life is in danger, and that he had better be got out of London.'

'But no one can have any interest in the boy's harm. It seems absurd to ask, but you positively have no other heir?'

'None. The boy Barri is the last descendant, in

the male line, of the sister of Giraldus Cambrensis. The title is extinct with him, and the estates might be left by Rhyader to build a church if anything happened to Barri.'

'I fancy — only fancy — this, Lord Festiniog. There must be some collateral branch, the representatives of which are unscrupulous. Some conscientious person has found out what they aim at, and has warned you.'

'Man! man! there is *no* collateral branch. The head of the Barrys might try some wild claim, but he and all his family are pre-eminently respectable, and besides, we have not been even related for three hundred years.'

'Some old charter may exist,' said George Drummond.

'That answers itself. If that is the case, why was the claim not made on my accession, or why is it not made now?'

That seemed unanswerable. George Drummond resumed the conversation by saying,—

'Well, Lord Festiniog, I am deeply attached to Barri, and he to me. I will take him anywhere you like, and leave you and Lord Rhyader to solve the mystery, for I am fairly puzzled. Where shall we go?'

'Take him to France and teach him the language, or indeed, anywhere you like. As for money, I find that.'

'Will Lord Rhyader not object?'

'Why no,' said Lord Festiniog, rubbing his chin. 'The fact is that Barri is too lively for them, when he is at home, and I fancy that they would not object to have him elsewhere. They have no vitality, and Barri has too much. There will be no difficulty there, particularly as I pay. Rhyader is a screw, and if he can give his boy a foreign tour for nothing, he is the very man to acquiesce. *She* won't offer any opposition I warrant you. But mind that you and I are in entire confidence; not a word of what I have said to you must escape your mouth.'

'You may trust me entirely,' said George Drummond; and so the thing was settled.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TUTOR AND PUPIL.

'BARRI,' said George to him, as he met him at the door next morning, 'I want to speak to you very seriously; what are you learning at school?'

Barri enumerated all human knowledge as given in the celebrated summary of Plato, and mentioned, moreover, French and German, in addition to the accomplishments of the ancient Greek philosophers; the fact being, that he knew nothing, except how to ride, to swim, to row, and to fight, and even those things indifferently. He was not a fool, and tolerably diligent, but he had desired to be everything, and was nothing. Lord Festiniog said that he had got such a smattering of everything that he would make a most admirable third-rate debater, and would consequently come to an evil end.

George walked with him along the street towards the Regent's Park, and insisted on speaking French to him. The boy could understand him

after one or two repetitions, but he could not answer him.

'In your position,' said George, 'you ought, at least, to have French at your fingers' ends; and you can't talk it.'

'I could learn to talk it,' said Barri, 'if I went abroad.'

'Would you like to go abroad?' said George.

'Yes, I should, very much.'

'Would you like to go abroad with me?'

'That would be too good a thing even to dream of,' said Barri.

'My boy, we all dream. I have dreamt a little too much, and my dream has not come true.'

'Ay!' said Barri, 'you mean about Heloise; but you will dream about some one else some day, and your dream will come most perfectly true.'

'So you think, my child. But are you ready to come abroad with me?'

'You are the only man I ever cared about,' said Barri, 'except, of course, my father and your father. But what is the use of talking about it? It cannot be done. Father would not mind: I don't think that he can call his soul his own. Mamma would not mind very much, because I know she likes me to be away sometimes. She would be sorry if anything happened to me, but I

am not good company for her, as I know too well. Grandpa likes me, and would never trust me out of his sight. He is lord and master, and he would never consent for an instant.'

'But, Barri,' said George, 'he desires it.'

'All right,' said Barri; 'I have nothing more to say. If he chooses to make me happy, I shall offer no objection. I don't believe that pa is grandpa's son.'

'Why?'

'I don't know; they are so utterly different. Pa does not care so much about me as grandpa does.'

'Well, you are not a very easy subject, Barri. You are very rude.'

'Was I ever rude to you or grandpa?'

'No.'

'That was because you or grandpa were never rude to me. My father and mother always are. Q. E. D. I should like to go abroad with you. You will be kind to me, will you not?'

'Did you ever know me to be unkind?'

'Why, no; but you never can tell. We shall get more familiar, perhaps, and shall forget small civilities. I believe that my father and mother are devoted to one another, yet they are always quarrelling.'

'I don't think that you are right in saying that, Barri.'

'Well,' said the boy, misunderstanding him; 'perhaps I am not. They never quarrel, but they often disagree. She is always ready to be down on him if he says or does anything wrong; and he would, at times, resent it if he had the pluck. He has not, you know. I have. He is always at his books, and she hates his books: she can't understand them. It is all very well,' continued this young schoolboy, 'talking about marriage, but I consider that it is a mistake, myself. My father and mother would have been much better apart.'

'I should think so, or you would not have been born.'

'That is the kind of thing,' said Barri, 'that they say to one another, and in my presence too. I don't wonder at it. They have neither of them got anything to do, and so they quarrel. If they would both turn Turk together and defy the Pope, they would get on most excellently. But then, you see, they will not. They spend their lives in disagreeing about small things; if they could agree about one large one, there would be no happier couple in the world. I wish they would both turn Roman Catholics.'

'And why?'

'Because I would not, and then they would have a point of agreement at my expense. I assure you, George Drummond, that I love them, but

I do not think that they are very fond of me.'

'Now, Barri, you must listen to me. You are coming away with me through Europe as my pupil, and you must obey me in every particular. You have got a little habit in your little head which must be got rid of. I say *must*, and I will be obeyed; you mind *that*. You are a sharp boy —a most objectionable thing to begin with; and you will turn out to be a sharp man—a horror not to be contemplated. You are beginning badly. You know a vast deal more than you ought to. What you have said about your father and mother is very smart, but you ought never to have said it. It was not gentlemanly.'

Barri looked up in his face, and said, 'Nobody likes me. I wish that some one would. I thought that you would. And I shan't die for so many years: it seems hard that nobody should like me. Put it to yourself, George. I have done no harm; I have only spoken the truth, and yet I am alone in the world. Even you have gone from me. I have no one now. Yes, I have aunt Arnaud. I will go to her; ay, and there is grandpa too. Let me go to them.'

'Won't you stay with me, Barri?' said George Drummond; 'you say that you are alone. Is your loneliness to be compared with mine? I will

be your slave, if you like, but don't leave me now, for I want a companion.'

The boy was puzzled. The mentor and tutor of five minutes before was, morally, at his feet. He could not understand the matter at all, but his instinct told him what to say and to do.

'George Drummond,' he said, 'be my friend, and make a man of me. I will follow you anywhere, and do anything which you tell me. But you must not bully me. I have had too much of that, and am in rebellion. Go anywhere, and I will follow you. You are the best friend I have ever made in my life. Take my hand, and let us go where you will.'

CHAPTER XIX.

CONFIDENCE BETWEEN MRS. ARNAUD AND GEORGE DRUMMOND.

GEORGE DRUMMOND went about London that afternoon, making inquiries about steamboats, outfits, expenses, and so on. He arrived about nine before No. 17, without the wildest idea of any result in his head. He had been thinking continually about Barri, and had neglected to put his latch-key in its proper place, and so, when he arrived before the door, he had to knock.

The door was opened by Rachel, who promptly informed him that Mrs. Arnaud desired to see him at once.

Why? Who could tell? He was so thoroughly puzzled by the day's proceedings, that he did not much care. But he had an instinct that a new mine was going to be exploded under his feet. He went into the back parlour, in which he understood that good lady was, and she saved him all trouble.

'Mr. Drummond,' she said, '*do* you know anything about this?'

'My dear Mrs. Arnaud,' he said, 'you are the very woman I should have wished to speak to about this painful and, I think, absurd matter. You must hold me blameless.'

'Undoubtedly. I never suspected you for an instant. The plot was executed before poor silly people, like you and myself, knew anything about it.'

'Executed! Mrs. Arnaud. You are out of your mind. There is no fear as long as I am alive of such a thing happening.'

'It is done, however,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'Now, make your mind easy, my dear madam. Assassinations are more often talked of than done. Read history, and see how seldom they succeed. Out of my own reading I could give you ten instances, and by going to the London Library I could give you twenty more. The boy is perfectly safe.'

'I do not understand you, Mr. Drummond. Of what are you speaking?'

'Why, of the proposed murder of Barri, of course. I fancied that you knew all about it, but I suppose I have let the cat out of the bag.'

'The murder of Barri,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'Have you been drinking, Mr. Drummond? No, I with-

draw that inquiry; you never do. Who can possibly want to assassinate Barri?'

'Oh! no one,' said George. 'I was mad; but I am not so now. Possibly you will tell me what is the matter; I thought you had a clue to something else. Now, go on.'

'You were very much attracted by Heloise, were you not?'

'Certainly.'

'She has been married to D'Arcy these four months. That is all.'

'Exactly. Well, I have known that since the morning, and I am not dead.'

'Who told you?'

'Lord Festiniog.'

'Who told him?'

'They told him themselves, by the advice, I believe, of Rachel, who was their confidant.'

'Hem!' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'Then she knew. Well, they are gone away now, and so long as you are satisfied, of course I have nothing to say. You seem very easily satisfied. I hate being deceived, myself. Now, we naturally come to this ridiculous nonsense about the murder of Barri. What is it?'

'I 'll be burned alive if I can tell you. There is no object for it. I have let out so much that I may be as well hung for a sheep as a lamb. Lord

Festiniog believes in it, and has asked me to take the boy abroad. I am going to do so.'

Mrs. Arnaud bent her head down, and remained in thought for some time. Once or twice, George Drummond said something, but she grew impatient with him. At last she said,—

'I have the key to this somewhere, but I must find it. Take the boy abroad, and at once, and leave everything to me. If I seem to do anything wrong, believe the best of me. I only desire to do right. I tell you, George Drummond, that I suspect that a certain woman, whom your father and I know, is at the bottom of all this. This comes with other things which I am utterly unable to understand. I only suspect an entire impossibility. Mind, I will never injure your father; only, I will do my duty by the family which has, on the whole, treated me so kindly and so well. Meanwhile, kiss me, George Drummond, for your own mother never could have loved you better than I do.'

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. ARNAUD TELLS A LIE TO DRUMMOND.

GEORGE and Barri went away to do the tour of the Continent together, and No. 17 saw them no more. D'Arcy and Heloise were gone, and Mrs. Arnaud was left alone with Rachel.

She had never been so much alone before. Rachel, 'excellent woman,' was no company to her, for Mrs. Arnaud thought she had been deceived by her in the matter of D'Arcy's marriage; and, besides, she was not a woman who could talk to servants. In her old semi-religious life she had always had some one to talk to, and to confide in; now, she had no one except Lord Festiniog. She was even deprived of him now, for a change of ministry occurred, and he was, to his own astonishment, and that of the world, asked to take a rather high position. He came to her one night, and told her that he did not think they would last a month. 'Fancy,' he said, 'putting me in office and passing over Rhyader. I don't know anything

about it. I can speak a little; but I never attended to politics. I suppose you see that James Drummond is going into parliament; that is a new idea. Have you seen him?'

'Why, no,' said Mrs. Arnaud; 'his election has made him very busy. I shall see him in a day or two. Any news from Barri, and his son?'

'Yes, nothing but good; they seem to get on charmingly together, and they are going to the south of Italy.'

'I will get their address, and write to George Drummond. He might go and see my poor child's grave at Ravenna.'

'Well thought of, Mary, but I won't have the boy taken there. It is an unhealthy hole of a place.'

'I hate the name of it,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'but George Drummond would, I know, go there and lay a wreath on the little child's breast.'

'Surely he would. By-the-bye, that woman who was with you there, is now living with Drummond as his housekeeper.'

'Is she? I do not care to see her. She recalls the most miserable time of my life. Yet, I liked her, too; she was very kind to me.'

'If you go to see him you will have to see her; but I wish you would go.'

'It shall be done.' And so they separated.

Drummond had now taken a furnished house in Wilton Crescent for a year, as befitted a member of parliament. He also had an establishment corresponding to the house; and so when Mrs. Arnaud knocked at his door one Sunday afternoon, she was admitted by a butler, with a footman to match, and saw nothing of the dreaded housekeeper.

He thought that it was some other person, and came out of the dining-room into the hall, before they had time to show her into the drawing-room. He said 'Good heavens!' and she went into the dining-room before him.

His lunch was not cleared away, and there was a decanter three quarters empty by his plate. She had a dim suspicion that he had been sitting there, alone, drinking. She did not see any signs of it in his manner, but still she thought so. She said at once, 'You and I are old acquaintance enough to allow me a liberty, Drummond. As we are alone, let me have a glass of wine.'

'Bring some sherry at once for Mrs. Arnaud,' he said to the butler.

'Nay, I will take some of what you have there,' she said.

'Bring the brown sherry directly, and don't stand staring there,' was his answer to the butler, who went away.

'Sit down, Mrs. Arnaud, I cannot tell you the pleasure I have in seeing you.'

'Drummond,' she said, sitting down, 'that is brandy that you are drinking, and there is not a drop of water on the table. I don't want any wine; I only asked for it to enable me to let you know that I see what you drink.'

'Why should I not drink brandy?' he said coolly, sitting opposite to her. 'I have nothing left to live for in the world.'

'Your son.'

'Oh, that fellow. Yes, but he would be better off if I was dead, would he not?'

'There are a few friends who care enough about you, still, to be sorry to see you drink.'

'Do you care about me, then?'

'I do, indeed, I assure you that I do. I think you used me ill once, but I have forgotten that. I think you behaved like a bad man to me in saying what you did, when you were married.'

'I was not married at that time, Mary.'

'My good friend, you know that you were.'

'I will swear that I was not, though, and I will swear that I was never married in my life.'

'That only makes matters worse then; but I have not come here to discuss your private affairs. I come to consult you.'

'As a friend?'

'Scarcely as an enemy, or I should not be here at all.'

'Can I ever be more than a friend to you, Mary?'

She let him call her so; she did worse; she did what never could be excused; she said:—

'It is not a time to talk about that. I do not say but that it might be possible in the future.'

What were her motives in telling such a falsehood? She had as much idea of marrying the man as she had of marrying Lord Festiniog. Her motives were not high, we fear. She liked being admired by the man; she liked to see her power over him; and her curiosity was strong. She suspected that he knew something which she desired to know, or that, at all events he could find it out for her, and so oblige Lord Festiniog, whom she liked very much: there was simply no other motive for her leading the wretched man on. And yet, the usual tenor of that woman's life had been before, and was again, perfectly truthful and loyal.

'I will die for you, Mary, if you choose.'

'I do not desire that, I want your advice and your assistance, that is all.'

'They are freely given. May I kiss your hand?'

She thought, and said, 'No.'

'That will be for the future I hope,' he said. 'Now, let me know what you wish.'

'Well then, Lord Festiniog seems to me a little mad.'

'Well, he will make a good mess in office, but he is certainly sane.'

'Well, you know best. He says that some one wants to kill Barri, and that is why he has sent him away with George.'

'That is very odd,' he said, looking straight at her. 'Who, on earth, could possibly want to kill the boy?'

'I thought that you might find out,' she said.

'Do *you* wish it found out?' said he.

'I do, very much. Can you find it out if you choose?'

'My dear Mary, all things can be found out if people choose to give information. If I find this out, shall I stand more highly with you?'

'Indeed you would; but I commit myself to nothing.'

'Not at all. I will go to work.'

'I thank you.' And so she went.

CHAPTER XXI.

DRUMMOND AND CARLINA.

THE door had scarcely closed upon her, when the smiling lawyer, Drummond, began walking up and down the room, more like a lunatic than the extremely keen, cold-blooded man he was. The butler came in and asked if he should clear away. Drummond swore at him and ordered him away. The butler went downstairs and swore *to* the footman, not *at* him. The butler swore that there was not a better master in England than Mr. Drummond, and the footman agreed. For Drummond, with all his villainies, was a very kind man. He used to tell a most intimate acquaintance that he could not bear the sight of sin or sorrow. He committed a vast deal of the one, and saw much of the other.

What was he to do now?—that was the question before him. His aim in life had been to marry Mrs. Arnaud. He had risked his liberty for that; he had become a criminal for that; now the

chance, as he thought, had come, and he dared not act. If he told her the truth, she would repudiate him: if he withheld the truth, what chance had he? She might, at any moment, say that he had continued to deceive her after her confidence with him; and he would be as far away from her as ever.

He sat back in his chair, and thought. He was a man eternally thinking and never acting. The time had come for him to act, and to act in the most decisive manner, and yet he could not.

A lie, nay more, a felony had been on his mind for nearly twenty years. That fact had made him drink at night, and go to sleep forgetting the matter. But if a man drinks at night he is crapulous in the morning, and so Drummond always woke with a nightmare more ghastly than any which came to him in his dreams.

He wanted to marry Mrs. Arnaud. Why? That is beyond our power to tell. There was nothing very particular about Mrs. Arnaud. We know her well, but she has nothing about her to make a man desire to marry her. She is a fine showy woman with every possible good quality, save that of consistent truthfulness. But the man who desired, or desires, to marry Mrs. Arnaud, was, or is, a thoughtless man. Consequently, James Drummond was a thoughtless man.

She would have made him a good wife. Certainly, but for how long? She would have cured him of all evil habits, such as that of drinking, but again, for how long? It is impossible to say, because she never married him. We will return to him as he sat after she had left him:—begging pardon for the digression.

When he looked up, Mrs. Arnaud was not in the chair before him. Silently, another woman had come into the room, and was sitting before him.

'Is that you, Carlina?' he said.

'I suppose that I am one of the most unmistakeable people in the world, and this is I,' she replied.

Most unmistakeable, assuredly. A handsome, very splendid woman. She had a shawl over her head, which made her face look more square and resolute than it would have looked had the vast mass of her coarse hair been freely falling about her shoulders, as was usually the case.

'Have you come here to plague me?' said Drummond.

'Yes,' said the woman, Carlina. 'I suppose you do not love me?'

'No.'

'You love that woman still, I fear?'

'Yes.'

'What are you going to do about the matter?

I will never hurt you, you know; but what will you do?'

'Carlina, shall I tell her the truth? Should I win her by—that way?'

'I cannot tell you. What on earth is in the woman? I have seen her, and I cannot see anything in her. Well, come Drummond, I will tell you what I am going to do with you. I am going to tell the truth.'

'You would not do such a thing as that?'

'I don't know,' said Carlina. 'It might be worth my while to do so. I might make terms with Lord Festiniog.'

'That would be sheer treachery,' said Drummond.

'How have I been treated, Drummond? I ask you how?' said Carlina. 'Man, there are things which you and I dare not talk of, even to one another. One thing, and one thing only, is in common between us, and that is the Ravenna business.'

'No one knows anything more about that than we do,' said Drummond.

'I beg your pardon,' said Carlina. 'The whole matter is known perfectly well at Ravenna. I can assure you of that fact. In Italy, people can know as much or as little as they like. A scandal like that cannot be hidden.'

'But, woman, George is going to Ravenna. Old Festiniog has told me so to-day; I do not know if the boy is going. George goes.'

'To dig himself up?' said Carlina.

James Drummond was not beyond a joke yet. He replied,—

'No, to lay a wreath on his own grave. Mary has asked him to do so. Lord Festiniog, as I said, told me so to-day.'

'The farce might get into a tragedy,' said Carlina. 'Come, take my advice, and make a clear breast of it. What can you possibly gain by keeping the secret?'

'Power over Mary.'

'That is to be thought of,' said Carlina. 'I would not pay this price for any man in the world that you are paying for that woman.'

'Women cannot love,' said Drummond.

'Oh, indeed!' said Carlina. 'Well, I go to another point; you have no power over this woman, none on earth. Knowing what we know, Barri always stands between you and any power over her.'

'Remove Barri.'

'He is in Italy, certainly,' said Carlina; 'but, even there, murder is expensive and dangerous. The removal of Barri is nonsense. Why cannot you be quiet over the matter, at least for a time?

I am puzzled myself. If you tell the truth she might hate you; and if you lied, and she found out the truth afterwards, she would hate you still more. One way or another, I don't think that she will ever marry you.'

'No?'

'Certainly not.'

CHAPTER XXII.

LORD FESTINIOG MAKES HIS REVELATION.

ALTHOUGH Lady Rhyader and Lord Festiniog had many polite quarrels, they liked one another as well as relations generally do. In France, as far as we have observed, relations and connexions are very scrupulously polite to one another; in our dear little island, relations, particularly if they are religious, find it necessary to do their duty by being rude, and saying things which no one else would dare to say. That is all for the best, no doubt, although the people in Massachusetts and Vermont do not think so. To avoid being led into an essay on the matter, we merely come back to the simple fact that Lord Festiniog and Lady Rhyader quarrelled continually, but liked one another tolerably well.

They discussed matters very much. She was not a bad-tempered woman, but she thought it her duty to be always in mild opposition to the ruling power, whether that power was represented by her husband or her father-in-law. Her belief was that Rhyader was the wisest of human beings, but that

he never must be allowed to find it out; consequently, they nagged at one another continually. The theory which she advanced to her father-in-law and the world was that he was a fool, who would be nothing without her. She had a profound belief in Lord Festiniog, though she would have died sooner than tell him so. She was an excellent little lady, but was totally unequal to a crisis.

One came, and she never put the matter before her husband; for although she would fight him at times on small matters, she yet was, at heart, afraid of him. She took it straight to Lord Festiniog. Possibly it was the best thing she could have done, for he was in possession of more facts than Lord Rhyader.

Lord Festiniog was at breakfast one morning, with his 'Times,' enjoying himself thoroughly, when his valet threw open the door, and announced Lady Rhyader.

'My dear soul,' said Lord Festiniog, sitting carefully on his chair, and not moving, 'what the—— what, on earth, is the matter?'

'My boy,' said Lady Rhyader, sinking into a chair.

'What! Barri?'

'Yes.'

'What has he been doing?'

'Get up, and take this letter from me.'

'I can't. Why do you come bursting into my dressing-room like a lunatic? Bring it to me.'

Lady Rhyader rammed a letter down before him, retired to her chair, and burst into tears.

She thought that he would be impressed with the letter. He did not appear to be so at all. 'This,' he said, 'is part of the nonsense which I have heard before.'

'Do you believe in it?' said Lady Rhyader.

'Partially,' said Lord Festiniog. 'Have you told Rhyader about it?'

'No.'

'That is a pity,' said Lord Festiniog. 'Would you mind going away?—because the fact is that I intend to walk through the whole of this business with a high hand, and I have not got my trousers on. The boy Barri shall be safe: no one shall touch him.'

'But, Lord Festiniog, do you believe this? Is it possible that the woman's words can be true?'

'I can't tell you,' said Lord Festiniog. 'James Drummond has lied to me more than once, and may have lied now. The woman does not seem to have lied. And, all said and done, Alice, what, in the name of confusion, does it matter? What can possibly befall Barri?'

'He is going to Ravenna with George Drummond.'

'Well, I wish he would go anywhere else,' said Lord Festiniog, 'it is a most unhealthy place.'

'Truly; and if he finds out the truth, which this woman says is perfectly well known there, what a safe nurse he would be for the boy.'

'Nonsense, nonsense, Alice; you would never suspect him?'

'What did you know of him before you entrusted my son to his care?'

'I don't know very much of him,' said Lord Festiniog.

'Any one is good enough for Barri, I suppose,' she replied, angrily; 'his father is a dear saint according to this woman,—is he not? His virtues may be hereditary.'

'I cannot distrust him.'

'Of course not,' she said, scornfully.

'Now go away,' he said, 'let me dress, and I will see all about it. Meanwhile I will telegraph to stop them going near the place. I will do everything which can be done, but you must let me do it in my own way. Now, go and tell Rhyader; you ought to have told him first.'

She went, and Lord Festiniog dressed hastily, and ordered his carriage. His valet noticed that he was extremely disturbed; he drove to the nearest telegraph-office, and was there for a short time; he had sent a message to Rome, requiring

George Drummond not to approach Ravenna, for that it was most unhealthy in the autumn; he was, however, too late here, though he did not know it: then he got into his carriage again, and told the coachman to drive to Ravenna.

'To where, my lord?'

'To Ravenna—I mean, to No. 17.'

'In which street, my lord.'

'Fool, are there two number seventeens in the world? There is but one, that in Hartley Street, and I wish that it had been burnt down before I saw it.'

All this temper and haste had entirely disappeared before he got there. Like a perfect gentleman, as he was, he apologized to his coachman, when he got out, for calling him a fool. He knocked at the private door, and was admitted by Rachel.

'Is your mistress at home?' he said.

'Yes, but Mr. Drummond is with her in the back parlour.'

He at once went out and told his coachman to drive into the square and wait for him, and then, putting a sovereign into Rachel's hand, he bade her silently show him upstairs into Mrs. Arnaud's private apartments.

Rachel was one of those extremely honest and crusty people, so much admired for their frankness, who could have risked her soul for a couple of

pounds; more dangerous humbugs do not exist; that sainted piece of virtue slipped Lord Festiniog past the parlour-door and up the staircase with the speed and dexterity of an experienced Spanish duenna.

When Mrs. Arnaud came up after her interview with Drummond, she started to find Lord Festiniog there, standing before the fire.

'How on earth did you get here?'

'I bribed your servant with a sovereign. Keep that woman, she is simply worth her weight in gold.'

'I have a good mind to send her to the right-about.'

'Don't do that,' said Lord Festiniog. 'Never part with servants who will tell everything they know for money; they are invaluable. I cannot get them. That woman might be useful. Now sit down to the most important conversation you ever had in your life. To begin with—what has Drummond been saying to you?'

'That is a very long story to tell, and I am loth to begin it; still more loth to end it, because the end will lower me in your estimation. I will tell it to you if you like, for you have always been kind to me. The man has always loved me from the first, but I have never cared for him. I never absolutely disliked him, or we should not have

been so intimate. He was very good to me abroad, and afterwards I thought him to be a villain, who was paying attention to me when he was married to another. Such, I now find, is not the case. Well, he has been renewing his suit to me.'

'With what success? It seems strange that he should do so after so many refusals.'

'Well, your family affairs are the cause of it. I felt positively certain that he knew, or could find out something about these extraordinary letters, threatening Barri's life. I wished to get at the truth, and I lied to do it. Now, you will never speak to me any more?'

'Don't talk nonsense, Mary. How did you lie?'

'Not at all in words, but I gave him to think that if he could find the matter out for me, I would look more favourably on him. I never meant to do so, but I wanted to get the secret from him.'

'Have you done so?'

'No. I cannot get him to speak; he will not without a decided written promise from me.'

'Which you have not given?'

'How could I, with the memory of Iltyd in my heart?'

'Oh! please never mind Iltyd; he was undoubtedly a saint; when did you ever hear me say to the contrary? He was my son; and I have

always stuck by my family, and paid their debts. Gervase might be fifty times the ass he is, but I would stick by him all the same; Iltyd, however, is dead and buried; try to forget him just now, or at least, don't Balmoralize over him.'

'I will not, then. Drummond has said that he will put me in a position I never dreamt of assuming if I would give him the promise of my hand.'

'What more has he told you?'

'Nothing. I have had such a terrible scene with him, Lord Festiniog. He drinks, at times, but just now he is mad.'

'He has not let out the truth to you, then?'

'I can't say, I do not know what the truth is. The matter lies in a nutshell: he wants to marry me; I will not marry him, and he holds some secret.'

'I have found it out, Mary.'

'Thank God, then, I have nothing more to do with it.'

'I fear that you have, Mary,' said Lord Festiniog. 'Can you cast your mind back to the time when you were at Ravenna?'

'Yes. I do not see any difficulty in doing that. I have told you of those times before.'

'Once again go through the facts.'

'Well, I went to Ravenna with Carlina. I had

my child with me. I fell ill there. I recovered, and the child died while I was delirious.'

'Drummond was with you?'

'Drummond was with me at first; but it was Carlina who told me of my child's death. Then, the doctor confirmed her.'

'Now, Mary, listen to me, and keep your head. Your child never died at all.'

'But I saw his poor little grave.'

'But he did not die, for all that.'

'When did he die, then?' said Mrs. Arnaud, very quietly, but rather—well—dangerously.

'He is not dead at all,' said Lord Festiniog. 'That is Drummond's great secret, and I have discovered it.'

Mrs. Arnaud burst out laughing.

'My lord,' she said, 'you are perfectly wrong. My poor boy is dead enough.'

'I think that I can prove the contrary,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I feel sure of it. I have had an interview with Lady Rhyader this morning, who knows what, I think, is the truth, and who is in a state of mind about it;—she always is in a state of mind, you know—but, previous to her coming, I had an almost overwhelming amount of authority in my hands. I have deceived her, but I will not deceive you. Your child never died at all.'

'Then if you allow that, and also allow my marriage, my son would succeed after Barri's removal.'

'Certainly. James Drummond knows it, and has traded on the fact. You can see that now?'

'Perfectly, my lord.'

'Do you remember George Drummond?'

'My lodger, why not?'

'Did you like him?'

'Yes, surely. He was very kind to me the first night I came here. He was in that miserable mistake about Heloise, and suffered for it. I took rather a fancy for him.'

'Mary, that young man is your son.'

There was a dead silence, scarce broken by the passing carriages in the street. She sat with her head bent over the fire, without saying a word. Lord Festiniog rose quietly and withdrew, putting a packet of letters in her hand. When he was gone, she read them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MARY ARNAUD'S GREATEST TRIAL.

THEY were simply the letters of the woman Carlina, the ex-mistress of Drummond, who had, in a fit of combined jealousy and avarice, put the whole of the facts before Lord Festiniog, and part of them before Lady Rhyader. Nothing did that excellent woman ever write to Gervase. She knew that he would never believe a word of it, true as it was. She was a countrywoman of Catherine de Medici, and knew perfectly well what she was doing.

The facts were most simple. We see, in this excellently ordered country of ours, stranger things every day. Drummond wished Mrs. Arnaud to be left alone in the world, and to be dependent on him. He had her child removed. Italy is no better than our unimpeachable England, and no worse. He paid freely, and the child was taken from her.

Carlina was his agent, but she nearly went too far. He had offered her a large reward to do the

thing for him. Knowing the certainty of her falling ill at Ravenna, at a certain time of the year, Carlina had persuaded her to go there. She succeeded perfectly.

But she was not a woman in the least degree likely to leave herself without witnesses. More people than she, in Ravenna, knew what had been done; in fact, the matter was so notorious, that she had to divide the money which she got from Drummond amongst those who were in the secret. She always, however, gave Drummond the idea that she was the sole repository of the secret.

It was only when the people, little better than banditti, whom she had employed, got too pressing for her pocket, that she came to London. Drummond had supplied her with money liberally, but she was getting middle-aged, and the continual calls on her worried her. She came to England with Drummond's money, and used it for the purpose of seeing if she could make a better bargain with Lord Festiniog. It seemed hopeless until she found that Drummond, with whom she renewed her acquaintance, was actually thinking of finding agents to remove Barri.

Drummond not only loved the mother, but he loved the son. The boy, George Drummond, had been adopted by him, and he, having no children, had taken to the boy. No boy in England had a

more affectionate father than George Drummond had in his present father, James Drummond.

He had it in his power to make the boy a possible earl, and at the same time he had it in his power to lay an overwhelming load of obligations on Mrs. Arnaud. In the last interview with her he had hinted very strongly on the latter point, and asked her to give him a promise of marriage on his parting with a secret which would make her the proudest and happiest woman in England, or leave her a melancholy and wretched woman, of doubtful position, for the remainder of her days.

She had been playing with him, and she saw on what terribly dangerous ground she had been walking. Not one word had she got out of him about the threats to Barri. He only reiterated that he could discover everything about the matter, if she made him the promise. She ended her trial and his by saying coolly, but with extreme terror, with her hand on the door,—

'James Drummond, I have made up my mind, at once and for ever. Sooner than marry you I would be found dead some cold morning in the casual ward of the worst workhouse in the city of London.'

'You distinctly encouraged me the other day,' he said, hoarsely, yet almost inaudibly.

'For that forgive me, James. I have made my ultimate resolution now. If you could make me a duchess, nothing would alter it. I am going, and, so, good-bye.'

'Then I must serve you in spite of yourself. Will you shake hands with me before I go?'

Her heart melted to him suddenly. She came back, sobbing, and said,—'God bless you, James Drummond, for your kindness in old times. May God save you from all evil.'

'God!' he said, taking her hand, 'why do not you do it yourself?'

She broke from him, and went upstairs, to find the whole mystery cleared up by Lord Festiniog. The man who had been her suitor for twenty-five years, to whom she had just been kind in a moment of pity, this man had inflicted on her the most ghastly injury which man could inflict on woman. He had kept his vile secret in his heart, to use against her, all these years; he had seen her bitter sorrow for her pretty child, and had never relented; he had professed love to her a hundred times; but now she saw what kind of love he meant, and cursed her beauty when she thought of it.

She had no pity on the man, of any sort or kind, but a most furious hatred; she felt as though she could have held the hand which had just clasped

his, in the fire. To torture her for all these years! to let her kneel on an empty grave, and offer up the purest prayers which ever flowed from human heart! She had prayed on the grave at Ravenna, that when she met Iltyd, purified and ennobled in heaven, her dead child might be with him in the form of a cherub, and that the three might pass into heaven together sanctified. All this, which had been the sentiment of her life, was made foolish, idle, almost absurd, by the selfish lust of a scoundrel.

Her throat was parched, and her hands were clenched, when she thought of what this man had done to her. More awful things came into her head. God had heard her fruitless prayers for her dead child, and had made no sign.

It would have been a bad thing for Mr. James Drummond had he come near No. 17 that night. He could never justify himself; his accomplice, Carlina, had noticed that a certain habit had greatly increased upon him lately, and thought that his life was not to be depended on. After his death, she would be completely ruined. She, therefore, like a keen Italian woman, just threw herself into the hands of Lord Festiniog, stated her case completely, of course, sparing herself as much as possible, and offered to go to Ravenna to prove it further, which she could easily do.

There was no doubt about the matter, as Mrs. Arnaud read through the letters which Lord Festiniog had left with her. He seemed satisfied that there was a strong *primâ facie* case, and had the woman in hand. She at once knew it to be true. A hundred acts and hints of Drummond's, a hundred circumstances after her recovery came crowding on her, and made the matter certain for her which might still be doubtful for others.

Yes, that wretch had violated all that was most tender in her nature, and what had she got in return? Even that had not been given to her by him, but by the partner of his crime. What had she in place of her beautiful child?—'George Drummond.'

'What,' she said, in her first burst of anger, 'was he to her?' Was there any resemblance in him to Iltyd? She had not seen him enough to judge, and yet she began to see resemblances in voice, features, and manners. She went to her desk and took out the portraits of her husband and her lost child, and sat before the fire to compare them to George Drummond.

It grew late and dark, but she sat, still, brooding over the fire, with the two pictures before her. She tried to pray, once or twice, but she could not. God had allowed her to make fruitless prayers

over her dead child, and had made no sign that he was living. The religion which had served her so well, through so many troubles, was suddenly swept away. Mrs. Arnaud went to bed that night, a lonely and desperate woman.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GEORGE DRUMMOND'S TEMPTATION.

FROM London to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Brussels, from Brussels to Namur, from Namur to Luxemburg, went George Drummond and Barri. Never were two such hearty companions in this world. Barri was, or seemed to be, in paradise. On only one subject was George at all disagreeable; he insisted on Barri speaking French every hour of the day before dinner. After dinner Barri might speak English, but before they had gone very far on their journey, Master Barri found French trip so lightly on his tongue that he preferred it, because he was proud of it; his French was by no means bad, and he had some right to be so. Finding at Strasbourg that German was necessary, he began studying that language, but made little progress in it.

Basle—the boy complained of Basle as being uncivilized; but then, by a divergence they made to Interlachen, he began to think more about

Switzerland. Then, they passed the mountains by the St. Bernard, and saw the monks and the dogs; then they passed on into Italy, until they came to Rome.

George Drummond at first had liked Barri as he might have liked half-a-hundred other boys, though, as a rule, he objected to the general run of boys, as mistakes. Barri, however, gained on him. The boy was shrewd, and would not only accept and understand a fact, but would generalize on it. Not always wisely, perhaps, but wisely enough to render an argument necessary, in which case his cousin, unknown as yet as his cousin, got the best, from superior knowledge and, possibly, superior intellect.

At last there came confidence between them. They were lying together in the ruins of the Coliseum, when Barri said,—

'George, I wish you would confide in me.'

'About what?' said George Drummond.

'About Heloise, of course. I know all the trouble you had about her. Why do men like you care so much about women? I did not care much for her.'

'You cannot understand these things, child,' said George Drummond.

'No; but I could speak to you about them when you were sorry. May I? For you have been so very kind to me.'

'My poor little Barri,' said George Drummond, 'you may talk as long as you please about Heloise. I have entirely got over that attachment. I loved her very much for a time, and I think that she made a fool of me. But she is far less to me than you are.'

'That is odd,' said Barri.

'Not at all,' said George Drummond. 'I have always thought that I should like to form a mind. Ever since I read Plato, I have thought of what the perfect prince or president should be. You are pure and clever, why should you not form yourself, young as you are, for the splendid position which you will ultimately occupy? Boy, if you did so, you might be prime minister of England. Do not speak any more to me about Heloise or any such people. I am carving my way in the world with desires and ambition before me, of which you cannot, as yet, dream. Your grandfather is no one; your father is a fool; you may do something yet. I would to God I was in your place.'

'I thought that you were still in love,' said Barri.

'That's all gone, my boy. I want a career. I have more than your ability: I want your prestige. You will be Lord Festiniog ultimately. It is doubtful whether I shall ever be in Parliament at all.'

'But you will be rich, George.'

'Rich. Yes, unless my father makes some fiasco.

Suppose he was to die to-morrow and leave me unprovided for; suppose he was to leave his money —*Maxima debetis*—elsewhere, where should I be? I don't know what to do, Barri. I am utterly sick of the world.'

'Then, come to church,' said Barri.

'I suppose that is the best thing,' said George Drummond. 'We'll go together.'

It was their first day at Rome, and Barri had seen nothing as yet. Holding tight by George Drummond, he passed through vast crowds, keeping on his feet as well as he could. It was an angry crowd, and they gesticulated at one another, but let them pass. The crowd grew thinner, and Barri found himself beside George Drummond in a vast building, with circular arches and domes which seemed to whirl above his head. There was a height before them of marble steps, down which streamed a crowd of singularly dressed people, some in brown, some in white, some in violet; near to the summit of the eminence which he saw, were groups of men in scarlet; before and below them went up a cloud of incense. Suddenly, an old gentleman in white came forward, and bowing, raised his hands. Barri was puzzled; it was the most awful and splendid thing which he had ever seen.

'Where are we, George?' he asked.

'In St. Peter's.'

'Who is the old man?'

'The Pope.'

So, from town to town, they went on idly. Lord Festiniog's telegram had missed them, and they were free to go where they would. They went to Naples, and it was there that George bethought himself of his promise to go to Ravenna and do what Mrs. Arnaud had asked of him.

Ravenna is a most abominable hole;—one of the most fever-stricken places in Italy—but he did not know that. He and Barri arrived there to find the Florence telegram sent on, forbidding him to go there. He telegraphed back to say that they had come there. Eight hours after, he received a telegram from Lord Festiniog, ordering him to send Barri back to Rome, but to stay there himself until he received letters. He telegraphed back to say that Barri was ill, and that he disliked to move him; still, he made an effort to do so, but found that the boy was too unwell to travel.

Barri was, undoubtedly, very ill. He had Mediterranean fever. 'A matter,' said the most excellent doctor, 'which time alone can remedy, Mr. Drummond. You are, I think, the now celebrated Mr. Drummond, of whom the lady, Carlina, forsooth, has written to me!'

'I am at a loss to understand what you mean, doctor.'

'It will be, I suppose, in the Courts of Law; so, why need we avoid speaking of it? It is a simple thing, and often happens here, as, probably, in respectable England. Madame Arnaud came here with her child. Drummond also came here with Mrs. Arnaud. He desired that her child should be taken from her. He was legal adviser of Lord —— the English names are droll.'

'Festiniog?'

'Exactly. Well, why more? Carlina and her relations did the matter for Drummond, and was, no doubt, paid. Her family assisted her; she has now telegraphed to her family to tell the whole truth about the matter. They will probably do so, if they are paid. I have known it for years; but what business could it be of mine? It remains, beyond doubt, that you are the cousin of this boy.'

'I cannot believe it.'

'Well, that is your affair. Half Ravenna will swear to it. The lawyer, Drummond, managed the business, and he will have to manage very dexterously to get out of the difficulty. The woman, Carlina, has paid her relations to keep this thing quiet; now, she has sent a message to say that she has made another bargain, and that the truth is to be told. You have, as far as I under

stand, only this boy between you and a vast fortune.'

'I will accept that as truth,' said George Drummond. 'Is the boy very ill?'

'He might live, or, with care, might die!'

'And no one the wiser, doctor?'

'No.'

'How well you speak English?' said George Drummond.

'I have practised much in Rome,' said the doctor.

'What should be done with him, if you wished him to live?' said George Drummond.

'He should be kept warm, he should have some one in bed with him. That is our practice.'

'And if you wanted him to die?'

'Well, if he is kept low and cold, a boy of that age would die. If you want to keep him alive, give him beef-tea and stimulants every four hours. If you want him to die, leave him alone. That is all I have to say. But I warn you, Mr. Drummond, that it is a very dangerous thing to go very near him and take his breath. Our fever is most distinctly contagious.'

'But, under the circumstances which you mention, the boy may live?'

'Undoubtedly. I will call to-morrow morning.' And so, the doctor went away.

The object of the death of Barri was now fully understood by George Drummond. He was next in succession. Lord Festiniog was too old to marry. Lady Rhyader could never have any more children, and he would be an Earl with 50,000*l.* a year. It was time for him to act in the matter.

He went to Barri's bedside. The boy was getting delirious, and his breath came hot, foul, and poisonous. He propped his head up and wiped his lips. The doctor had said that he was to have port wine and beef—where were they to be got? Not even at the British Consul's at that hour.

But there was brandy and some portable soup which they had bought on their travels. He made a mixture of these things, and got the boy to swallow them. Then, he turned the silly old crone who was watching the boy out of the room, telling her that he was going to sleep with him. She went, saying that he was going to his death-bed. She had never learnt the magnificence of duty. In what school could she possibly have been taught it?

The boy turned, sometimes, in the night, with his fœtid breath hot on George's cheek: he asked always for drink, and George got up and gave it to him, though one act of neglect on his part might have given him all that he desired in this world.

Mrs. Arnaud who scarcely cared for him, Lord Festiniog who scarcely liked him, Lord Rhyader

who did not care to think about him, would have held different opinions about him, had they seen his patient love for the boy who stood between him and all his earthly ambition, through the next three days. The only man who really loved him, the only man who would have understood him, the only man who ever knew him at his best, was the poor, ruined, maddened attorney, Drummond, whom he had so long believed to be his father.

On the morning of the second day, he made inquiries, about Ravenna, as to the circumstances made known to him by the doctor. There was no doubt about them. The good folks of Ravenna laughed when they were spoken to on the subject. On the third day he got a letter from Lord Festiniog, saying that he was *primâ facie* satisfied, and commending Barri to his care.

So, the poor wearied head of Barri rolled about upon the pillow, and George Drummond watched it, as though it was the most precious thing to him in the world. One single act of neglect would have put him in a splendid position, and given him everything which the world could give.

But George Drummond was a better nurse to the boy than could have been got for money. Why? Simply, because he loved the boy better than he did himself; and because, prig as he was, he loved his duty better than either.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DISASTER.

By degrees his charge recovered, and George gladly obeyed orders from home to return. The time selected was long past the equinox, and it seemed hard to go from the bright Italian sky into the darkness of London. They went again to Rome, and, by medical advice, stayed there a short time, and saw the Pope again, which was, at once, a mystery and a delight to Barri. George was a Protestant; and tried to teach the boy that the present Pope, though the most amiable of mankind, was, personally and authoritatively, the enemy of all that was good. It was no use at all—the traditions of his family were too strong; his ancestor De Barri, Giraldus Cambrensis, had admired the Popes of those times, why should not he admire the Pope of these times? George had no answer to his young charge, and they got on very admirably until they came wandering to Leghorn.

Here Barri was slightly ill again, and George got

alarmed about him. He sent for the famous English doctor there, and consulted him.

The doctor said that Barri had a slight relapse, and ought to be kept perfectly quiet, with as little motion as possible.

'But,' said George, 'I am his tutor, and I am ordered to bring him home; the boy is heir to a large estate, and I dare not show my face in England if anything happened to him.'

'I should not take him over the Alps,' said the doctor. 'Does he mind the sea?'

'Not at all.'

'Then take him round by steamer, and let him get the fresh air; it would be the best thing in the world for the boy.'

'There is no danger at this time of the year?' said George.

'Good heavens! my dear sir, we are not in the North sea. *We* never have *our* ships lost, even in the Bay of Biscay. No, take your pupil round by sea, by all means. But I see that you are in difficulty; who is your patron?'

'Lord Festiniog.'

'He is head of the family still, eh?'

'Yes, and likely to remain so.'

'Well, then,' said the doctor, 'I will write to him, and tell him that you, as tutor, did not recommend the course, but that it was done on my authority.'

'I shall be much obliged to you,' said George; and the doctor wrote.

'My Lord,—I have ordered, on my professional responsibility that Mr. Barri Arnaud, the hope of your house, should not cross the Alps at this late season. Mr. Drummond, his respectable and intelligent tutor, will, therefore, take him by sea from this place.

'The boy requires quinine and iron; also, I should let him have port wine in your climate, not, of course, in sufficient quantities to encourage a desire for stimulants, but in sufficient quantity. Exercise, change of scene, and athletics, but not objectless ones, are what the boy mostly wants. Expand his chest, or he will never make an orator —the thing, I suppose, which you desire.

'As for yourself, don't believe in colchicum for that gout of yours. Come here, and I will get you up in a fortnight. Climate, my dear lord—climate is everything, and there is no climate in the world like Leghorn. To me it was left to discover this city.

'Your Humble Servant,

'GEORGE PILGARLIC, M.D.'

'Shall I send this by post, or will you enclose it to Lord Festiniog?' said the doctor.

'I will enclose it,' said George Drummond.

'Good, then, here it is: I will introduce you to the captain of the *Newcastle*, and see that you have the best berths. What is this I see? My dear sir, I never take fees from people in Lord Festiniog's position; it does not pay in the long run; I mean that I am already under too deep obligations to his lordship.'

George Drummond wrote to Lord Festiniog, and told him of the decision. He enclosed another letter, strangely different from the doctor's.

'Sir,—As you now know the whole facts of your position, I can be perfectly frank with you. When this letter is gone to you, I shall show a copy of it to my lord; not before Mr. Drummond has left London, and has gone south, with what purpose I am not prepared to say. I only say that two courses are open to you.

'If you bring the boy Barri over the Alps, there is great danger to him. I should not do that if I were in your place. I think it dangerous. I know it to be dangerous. I, most certainly, if I cared for his life, should do nothing of the kind.

'A sea-voyage after our marsh fever is always recommended. By avoiding the Alps and coming by sea from any port, you would save two people

from the commission of a crime, yourself and Mr. Drummond.

'CARLINA GERSOTTI.'

George Drummond thanked God that the difficulty was cleared out of his way by the independent testimony of two people. He would get his cousin home, and remove the horrible responsibility from his shoulders. The boy, whose death would ennoble him, was getting dearer and dearer to him.

And he saw such wondrous promise in the boy; Barri had twice the intelligence which he had had at the same age, and only wanted education: that he could give, and make a great man of him, as he thought. 'I shall see him from afar off at first, but the deuce is in it if I don't make a name in the world too: I in one place, he in another. We shall make a sound in both houses yet.'

So they sped away across the Mediterranean. What were his thoughts about the man who had been such a kind father to him? We cannot say. All we know of the man is from Barri, and to Barri he never mentioned Mr. Drummond or Mrs. Arnaud. The boy was in absolute ignorance, to the last, that George was his cousin. That had been agreed on between Lord Festiniog and himself; the boy was only to know after they came home. And so they

went on their voyage together, Barri looking about the ship, and George watching him, as though the slightest accident would not put him in a position for which some men would have committed a crime.

The bay was passed, and they saw Ushant under a lurid sunset. The barometer had lowered so suddenly that the captain made up all his fires, and headed apparently for America. George laughed to him about his course.

'If we get behind the Start, Mr. Drummond,' he said, 'we are lucky. You are no sailor.'

'Why, no,' said George Drummond, 'will there be any danger?'

'God knows,' said the captain, 'the ship is too long and too narrow. By Jove! see, there it comes.'

The sun had scarcely sunk into the sea, when the western sky was as black as pitch. As sail after sail, which it was impossible to get in, was blown away, with a sound like a cannon followed by a rattle of musketry, George Drummond stood on deck, amused with his good fortune in seeing a real storm at sea. He went down once to where Barri was now sleeping quietly, and looked at him. He had no thought of danger, but the boy seemed cold, and he put another coat over him; then, he went on deck.

It was piercing cold, and the engine-room looked bright and warm. There had been a heavy Atlantic sea all day, necessitating the using of the compensating gear, for her screw was frequently out of water. He was a great friend of the engineer, and he stepped down, cigar in mouth, to see how the gear worked. He sat in the little room and baked himself. The engineer was not at all alarmed; though, as the captain had put her head, she was pitching heavily.

It was beautiful to sit in the warmth, and watch the working of the compensation gear; as her bow dipped it spun rapidly, as her stern dropped it stopped slowly. They have better things of the kind now, but the original one was a splendid idea.

Her stern was out of the water higher than ever, and they were nearly unseated. The compensation gear was spinning as hard as ever. It had got out of order. The engineer rose hurriedly, with an oath, but it was too late, a ripping crack went through the ship, hurried feet were heard overhead, and the word went about that the screw-shaft was broken.

At once, of course, the ship was in the trough of the sea, a more fearfully dangerous engine of destruction than M. Victor Hugo's celebrated loose cannon. Every mast went overboard directly, at her first whip up into the wind. She was nothing better than a floating wreck, with the sea bursting

on board of her every moment. In ten minutes, the warm engine-room was changed into a sea of stinking steam, in ten minutes more, it was a seething sea of black coal mud.

George hurried to Barri at once. He had been thrown out of his bunk, and was dressing himself. He took him up to the cabin, and then he asked what was the matter?

'There is danger. Will you sit here while I go down again?'

'I will try to stand,' said Barri.

George was scarcely away from him for five minutes; then he came up with his desk, and wrote a few hurried words, which he folded up and put in the breast-pocket of Barri's pea-jacket.

'We might part, Barri, you see,' he said. 'Give that note to Lord Festiniog. You must get ready, my boy. I hear the captain ordering out the boats.'

Barri was perfectly still, but very much frightened. The captain came in, hurriedly, after a time, and said,—'Mr. Drummond, I have lost my ship. I have the long-boat out, and some men in her. Will you and your charge jump into her at once, or she will be stove against the side?'

'Now, Barri, be firm,' said George. 'You must leap into the boat.' And so they passed out of the cabin into the horrible hell of the tempest.

The ship was beginning to settle down. One boat had been got out, and she was still fast to the ship. George put Barri on the bulwarks, and told him to jump into her. The boy was terrified.

A brave man might have been. The boat was surging, leaping, diving nearly head under, in the lee of the ship, at one time near the side, at another an oar's length away. The men in her were shouting to those who were on the bulwarks to leap. Few dared. Was the boy to blame?

'Leap yourself, Mr. Drummond,' said the captain; 'the men will cut the painter directly; your life is more valuable than the boy's.'

George Drummond had other ideas, though. He took Barri in his arms, and at the next and last surge of the boat towards the ship he dropped the boy among the sailors at his feet, before she swerved away from the ship again. The man at the bow cut the painter, and the boat parted from the ship. A great roller parted them, and they saw one another no more.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BARRI'S RETURN.

LORD RHYADER received one morning the following singular telegram :—

'Brown Jones, Falmouth. Lord Rhyader, Bolton Street, Piccadilly. Come here at once. Boat "Nemesis" has been picked up by "Arethusa," and men landed here in Sailors' Home. Boy says that he is your son. Men confirm it. Boy rather exhausted. Come directly.'

Lord Rhyader had for some time disliked to do anything without his father's advice or knowledge. The fact was that Lady Rhyader was getting a little peevish, and they did not get on so well together as they did formerly. She always, when consulted about anything, at once opposed it, without a moment's thought, and then defended her opinion through thick and thin; while, on the other hand, old Lord Festiniog always thought before he spoke, and then gave the best advice he could. Consequently he gained, without meaning it, a

power over Rhyader which his wife had lost. She knew it, and was jealous of it. Lord and Lady Rhyader were, of course, on the best of terms; but it was impossible to deny that there was not more confidence between father and son than between wife and husband. He, on this occasion, however, never thought for one instant of his father. With an energy of tenderness which he had not shown for a few years, he ran into her dressing-room, and, with his arm round her neck, read the message to her.

'Alice,' he said, 'you must help me now.'

'Gervase,' she replied, 'I am as well able to help you as Lord Festiniog: or, indeed, as Mary Arnaud. We must act together here, my love, and never act apart any more.'

Lord Rhyader was man enough to say no more: if she had been in the wrong, so had he. They had both been a little too much absorbed in their separate selves, and the potential disaster united them at once. The truth must be told, they had never cared very greatly for the boy: he did not suit them, and they were more comfortable without him than with him. Now, however, he was likely to be lost by some hitherto unexplained disaster, they were in confidence instantly: in a confidence which lasted to their deaths—as far as it went.

They both knew that their mutual confidence

had returned. They made no effort at an explanation, the chances would have been as ten to one that they would have quarrelled had they done so. The new, unspoken reconciliation between them was so pleasant that neither of them desired words.

'We must start at once, Gervase,' she said, with a view of bringing in other matters.

'At once,' he said, ringing the bell, which was answered before either of them spoke. He and she gave directions for an immediate and sudden journey, and they were alone again. She chivalrously broke the ice for him.

'This is a piece of your father's work, Gervase.'

'So it seems,' said Lord Rhyader.

'Our boy Barri is sent abroad with George Drummond, who it seems is heir to the house. Do you believe it?'

'Yes, darling. I think that there is little doubt about it. Don't attempt to dispute that. Drummond has confessed it, you know.'

'Well, I will not dispute it. But that young man is suddenly taken into favour, and sent abroad with our boy. Who did that? answer me.'

'My father.'

'Exactly. And what do you think of your father now?' This was said with scorn.

Lord Rhyader thought about his father as he

had always done, as a good gentleman and a kind friend. But he saw from Lady Rhyader's eyes that she considered that she had scored a point against him, and was too polite to contradict her. He said nothing, but looked as if there was really nothing to be said in palliation of his father.

'Mark my words, Gervase,' she said solemnly, rising up to prepare for her journey, 'this is a plot, hatched out at No. 17, and Mary Arnaud is in it. Your father, although dictatorial, is weak, and he has been led into it by that woman.'

'But, my dearest Alice, I don't think——'

'Good. When I am dead, and you know the truth, you will remember my words. I will go and get ready for my journey.'

'But, Alice, my father would not lend himself to anything underhand. You must think of that.'

She thought of it, at once, in her usual way, for one second, and then enlarged upon it, without exactly knowing what she was going to say next. 'You will find it, Gervase, exactly as I have put it to you: and if your father was here before me, I would tell him the same thing. Will you be convinced by one question? Where is George Arnaud?'

Lord Rhyader seemed to think that there was a great deal in that, though he could not tell why, knowing nothing about the matter. He said,

rather meekly, 'I suppose we had better send this telegram on to my father?'

'I suppose that you had better,' she said: 'that would be only decent; but let us get to Falmouth first. I don't want his interference.'

They were a difficult couple to move. The telegram had been sent to Lord Festiniog more than two hours before they were at Paddington. They were not deeply anxious, for there was nothing to make them so in the telegram. They took the journey quite comfortably in the train at noon, wrapping themselves up warm, eating and drinking, in a trifling manner, and getting up their mutual case against Lord Festiniog. Lady Rhyader acted as attorney, and Rhyader himself accepted the brief provisionally, knowing perfectly well that he would no more dare to say one half of the things to his father which his wife put into his mouth than he dared fly. However, he knew that his father had some sixty or eighty thousand pounds which he could leave to his groom, and so he held a large trump card over his wife, in case she should go too far, and provoke an entire rupture. He let her ease her long-suppressed mind on Lord Festiniog, therefore, with the greatest complacency: and they got on most charmingly: particularly as he intended to make her spokeswoman in the business, whatever it was.

And that he could not quite make out; there was to be a war of liberation from his father's authority, and his father in his chivalry would never quarrel with him for taking his wife's part. If there was to be any real fighting, she could do it better than he could; and he could always check her by reminding her of the loose cash.

So they amiably got to Shrivenham, and got out there to walk about while the train was being shunted. It was an unusual thing and Lord Rhyader asked the station-master the reason of it.

'A special train a-coming through, sir. Stand back there! stand back!'

A distant humming sound, then a long-drawn shriek; then an approaching roar which swelled upon the ear. Then a vision of a fiery dragon filled with smoke, fire, and steam, coming towards them swifter than the wind, with pulses going quicker than a madman's heart; smoke-grimed, steadfast men upon the monster's back, guiding it as it shook the station with a shock like an earthquake. One saloon carriage in the rear of the engine, which seemed to leap at the point. That was all, the whole terrible and dangerous arrangement was out of sight before the echoes which it had raised could die away.

Lord and Lady Rhyader continued their journey methodically. The greatest event in their journey

to Falmouth was that Lady Rhyader's maid lost a shawl. The loss was discovered at Exeter; the lady's maid having, as a preliminary to confession, given a month's warning in the waiting-room, told Lady Rhyader of the awful fact. Lady Rhyader was in tears at once. It was not a very valuable shawl, and she could not bear to part with her maid. She did not care about the matter, and Rhyader with that shrewdness which his father ranked so high, discovered that the maid had got the shawl on herself: and the valet proved that in the confusion at Shrivenham he had, in an absent moment, put it over the young woman's shoulders. Lady Rhyader made her a present of the shawl, and so sold her liberty to her maid. The month's notice was withdrawn, and they, to use a Devonshire expression, drumbled on to Falmouth.

What was their astonishment when they were met by Lord Festiniog at the door of the hotel! He was among a group of sailors, talking eagerly to them, but he seemed to know of the Rhyaders' coming perfectly well, and to take little thought about it.

'I have got the boy here, upstairs,' he said: 'but I doubt if we shall ever make anything of him again. It is the most unhappy business which ever was seen. The poor boy is idiotic. I can't

get anything out of him. He has had a shock to the system from which he will never recover, unless we take very great care of him.'

Lady Rhyader, now, was seriously alarmed. Her rebellion against Lord Festiniog might stand over, at all events for a time. She went swiftly upstairs to Barri, and from the moment she saw him never thought about herself as long as she lived. After she had once seen the boy she thought no more of Lord Festiniog. The terror of the sight before her put every frivolous and ill-tempered idea from her mind for ever. Who was to blame for the catastrophe? She cared nothing at all. It was her own child who was before her, the child for whom she had cared too little, as she saw now, but, in what fearful case!

Worn almost to a skeleton, he was sitting up in bed, rocking his body to and fro, as if to allow for the motion of a boat. His right hand, thin with illness, clutched the mattress convulsively, while his left was held up as if to shield him from an enemy expected every moment. The nurse explained it to her. The boy had been three days in the open boat in the heavy sea, and had sat like that with his right hand clasping the gunwale, trying to shield himself from the drenching waves which sometimes broke over them from the South-West. 'The men put him to leeward, ma'am,'

said the nurse; 'that is why he holds his left arm up to shield himself, and holds on to the gunwale with the other.'

'Why will he not lie down?' said Lady Rhyader, utterly terrified.

'He will never lie down any more, ma'am,' said the nurse. 'He will have the rattles in the throat in ten minutes.'

'Get out you old fool, do,' said a voice behind them. 'How dare you, you crone, frighten her ladyship like this, when you know that the best man in Europe has given his opinion to-day?'

Lady Rhyader turned: it was Lord Festiniog who spoke.

'My dear Alice,' he said, 'do not listen to the croaking of this old witch. When you sent me the telegram this morning, I did two things,—ordered a special train, and got Sir Alexander McFittie to come with me. He says that the boy will not die, but that he has a nervous shock which will spoil his career, at least for a very long time. You must brace up your nerves, my dear, you must nurse the boy, and so make him fonder of you than he was before. That is easily done, for he is an affectionate little fellow, and you might make him, at least, as fond of you as he is of me.'

He was going to say,—as he was of Mary Arnaud—but he thought twice before he said that.

'Lady Rhyader,' he said, suddenly and sternly.

'Yes, Lord Festiniog.'

'Have you done your duty by this boy?'

'No,' she said. 'You always made the boy jealous of us. How could we possibly do our duty by him?'

Lord Festiniog had never looked on it in that light before. He said,—

'I should not have looked on the matter in that light myself.'

'Without doubt,' said Lady Rhyader, determined to win every point she could possibly score, but wondering what would be the next one.

'Well, let bygones be bygones, let us take care of the boy. You stay with him, I must go and break the news to Mary Arnaud.' And so he went out to Lord Rhyader, leaving mother and son together.

'What, on earth, has Mary Arnaud got to do with it?' thought Lady Rhyader. But there was the boy, delirious in his bed, calling out for that woman and not for his own mother.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES.

HE found Lord Rhyader alone, walking up and down the room, and a very important conversation ensued between them.

'I have made light of your boy's case to Alice, Gervase,' he said, 'but there is no doubt whatever that he is extremely ill, and it is very doubtful if he will live to be a man. You must really rouse yourself to look facts in the face. The boy has undergone horrors and privations which have half killed those strong sailors who have brought him home. Do you know that a mutinous part of the boat's crew wanted to ——'

'Well?'

'Well,—wanted to kill the boy for a horrible purpose. It was only by the resolution of two or three that he was saved. And he knew it, for he heard them talking about it, and he will, it is feared, never get it out of his head any more; such shocks are not felt at his time of life without permanent results.'

'I am deeply grieved, father, but I do not share your fears to this extent which you speak of. I cannot understand your anxiety.'

'It is real, however,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I loved the boy, I think, better than you did.'

'I will not argue that point, father,' said Gervase. 'If you loved him so much, why did you insist on his going abroad with his only rival?'

'I sent him abroad to keep him out of mischief. I sent him abroad with George Arnaud because I trusted the young man. He has gloriously fulfilled his trust.'

'By bringing back my boy an idiot,' said Lord Rhyader.

'Bringing?'

'Yes. I suppose he has taken care of himself?'

'George! Have you not heard? George went down with the ship, and saved the boy at the sacrifice of his own life!'

'Good heavens!'

Lord Rhyader was silent for some time. He was a just man, and his regret at having been so unjust to George was great. 'You are sure of this?' he said.

'Hear for yourself; ask one of the sailors in. Send in George Horrocks,' he said to a waiter who was in the room.

A sailor came in. 'My son, Lord Rhyader,'

said Lord Festiniog, 'wishes to ask you a question or two. Your general evidence will be given before the Board, of course, but answer him what he asks you.'

'I wanted to know if Mr. Drummond could have saved his own life, if he had deserted the boy whom he dropped into the boat?'

'Most certainly, sir,' said the sailor; 'half-a-dozen times over. The boy was frightened and would not jump, and so, he gave up his own life for the boy's, fair and square. No doubt about *that*.'

'And you saw him drowned after, with no attempt to save him?'

'We had done all that it was possible for men to do. We kept near her until she went down, in hopes that some one might rise, but I need hardly say that no one did. We incurred great danger by not keeping the boat's head straight before the wind, at once, as you would know, my lord, if you were a sailor.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Lord Rhyader. 'I have no doubt that everything was done. I wish you a good afternoon,' and the man went.

'There is the end,' said Lord Festiniog; 'the end of a good family, too.'

'If Barri dies.'

'Well, his life is very problematical. In case of

his death, the entailed property all goes to you, and, I suppose, afterwards to some religious establishment. I am more sorry than ever about George.'

'You seem to think more of him than you do of Barri, now.'

'There you do me an injustice, as usual, Rhyader. I have a stronger personal feeling for the boy than ever I had for poor George Arnaud. I loved the boy better than ever you did. My feeling for him is one thing, my feeling for the extinction of our family is another.'

'The remedy lies entirely in your own hands, father,' said Rhyader. 'Alice will live to any age, and have no more children. The remedy lies with yourself.'

'I do not see how.'

'Marry, yourself.'

Lord Festiniog kept steady on his feet, but, morally, he reeled as this proposition was made to him. He had not thought of such a thing for thirty years. Was Rhyader mad?

Apparently not. He was most perfectly cool over the matter, and appeared in earnest. He repeated,—

'Marry, yourself.'

'But you would not approve *that*,' said Lord Festiniog.

'I should, most entirely,' said Lord Rhyader. 'Why should I not? It can make no difference to me, and would prevent my feeling any responsibility as to the disposal of the property.'

'But I am so old,' said Lord Festiniog, still doubting if he heard aright.

'Not a bit. You are only sixty-two.'

'But whom am I to marry? You are mad. Have you any one in your eye? Have you ever thought of this before?'

'Never. It only came into my head when I heard your description of poor Barri. As for the lady, why, you must choose for yourself; I really am too much out of the world to advise you.'

'Just conceive how very much at random you are talking, my dear Rhyader. What would Alice say to you, if she knew that you had made this proposition?'

'Oh! you must not think of speaking about it to her yet. It may come to nothing. Think about it for yourself.'

Lord Festiniog had plenty of time to think about it, for he by no means went back by express. The slowest train on the line would do for him *now*, for at the other end he had to tell poor Mary Arnaud that her newly-found and scarcely-known son was dead.

'Poor thing!' he said to himself. 'This world is

very hard on her. There seems to be no end to her troubles. I wish she could have made up her mind to marry Drummond, and that he had not been such a rascal. She might have been happy with him.'

He had forgotten the awful proposal which Lord Rhyader had made of his own marriage. This thought of Mrs. Arnaud's marriage brought it back to him with a shock.

Going by a slow train, Lord Festiniog naturally met with an accident. His own special train, in which he had come down, had to be sent back to Paddington somehow. It was sent back in the rear of the ordinary slow train, and, by way of distinguishing *itself*, dashed into the ordinary train by a combination of circumstances which were afterwards proved to be entirely impossible. It was clearly proved before the Board of Trade that the thing never could have happened, and yet it did, for all that, and Lord Festiniog broke one of the small bones in his hand, and, in trying to give assistance, had his whiskers scorched by the fire of one of the engines. When asked which, he declined to answer the question, as he might commit the company, in which he was a large shareholder.

He, however, got to London somehow, and was driven to his house in due time. To his great

surprise he found that Mr. Drummond had called three times on that morning. He had not thought that Drummond would have sought him so very eagerly, and he was puzzled.

Meanwhile it was necessary, in common kindness, for him to go and see Mary Arnaud, and break the news to her as gently as possible. He had not been near No. 17 for some time, and felt considerably guilty on that score. Mary, of whom he was secretly afraid, would be angry with him in the first instance. She had always had a good case against the family, and now had a stronger one. He would have to tell her that her so recently acknowledged son was drowned. It was not a very agreeable matter under any circumstances; still less so under the present.

People enjoy themselves in three ways: by anticipation of a pleasure, by the realization of that pleasure, and by the recollection of it afterwards. In the same way people plague themselves in three ways: by the anticipation of the trouble, by the realization of the trouble (which is generally not half what they thought it to be), and thirdly, by the solution of the trouble, and the humiliating doubt as to whether there was any trouble to be afraid of after all.

Lord Festiniog was deeply plagued about Mary. He knew, or thought that he knew, that he should have a scene with her. And he was not well; the

railway accident had shaken him, his finger was in pain, and that irritated him. He had anticipated more than half his troubles, however, before he drove up to her door, at nine o'clock in the evening.

The house was completely dark, as he knocked at the private door. It was opened with startling rapidity, and he found himself pulled into the passage, and the door shut behind him. There being no light, he was unaware of what was going to happen to him ; he was not long in doubt. He was kissed in the dark all over his face.

'Darling,' said the kisser, 'it is so good of you to come from the club so soon; and you have not been smoking. Good child; come up now, and smoke in our bed-room.'

The lady, who had her arm round his neck, was proceeding to stroke his hair. Lord Festiniog had gone as far in an explanatory speech as 'Madam, I think you are in error,' when the hall was suddenly illuminated by two candles. Lord Festiniog saw that one of them was carried by Mrs. Arnaud, and the other by the terrible old madame of Paris. Regarding himself as a lost man, he looked down to see who was accidentally kissing him. He discovered at once that it was ex-Mademoiselle Heloise, now Mrs. D'Arcy.

She, with a shriek which was nearly a yell, fled

for protection to her grandmother, and threw herself on her bosom. They both came down together; Madame Mantalent, being underneath, made some vigorous attempts to break her granddaughter's head with the candlestick. Mrs. D'Arcy, now alive to the situation, and having had to do the thing once or twice before, defended herself in such a scientific manner, that Madame Mantalent cast the candlestick at Lord Festiniog, and begged for life, saying that she was an old woman, and would not trouble them long.

Lord Festiniog and Mary Arnaud got the old lady on her feet, and took her into the little parlour. Mrs. D'Arcy, the gentle and excellent Heloise, came into them, and then it appeared that that most excellent of young ladies had lost her temper.

She was as beautiful as ever; nay, she was looking better than ever she had done; but old Lord Festiniog's eyes were opened, as regarded her, for the first time. The thin crust of *bourgeois* French respectability had been worn through, and the real nature appeared below.

Let us not be misunderstood in any way. Three-quarters of France and three-quarters of Ireland produce a population which the whole world, for certain qualities, cannot match. But there is a residuum in both countries unmanageable, and save on one solitary subject, unsympathetic. We name

no provinces in either kingdom, and yet we know that we have to deal with certain people, possessing certain virtues, as we would with wild beasts.

Heloise came from a part of France pre-eminent for its virtues, but also pre-eminent for its temper. She had lost her temper, firstly, because she had kissed Lord Festiniog in the dark, and, secondly, because her grandmother, who came from the same part of the country, had beaten her over the head with the candlestick. What is mainly to the purpose, however, is the fact that the scene which followed between her and her grandmother put the idea of matrimony in a rather difficult light to Lord Festiniog's eyes.

The debate was carried on in the French language, which was possibly a relief to the servants, but none to Mrs. Arnaud or Lord Festiniog, who were both mistress and master of that fluent and elegant language, so well adapted for all phases of soul. Mrs. D'Arcy and Madame Mantalent, being both extremely angry, used the resources at their command with all the genius of their nation. At one period of her life, Madame Mantalent had not been so successful in her affairs as she was now, and every detail of those times was hurled in her teeth with the most singular epithets. In this 'hurling in the teeth,' the fact that those teeth were false, and that they never had been paid for until

the outraged laws of France forced the old lady to do so, was by no means forgotten. Madame Mantalent's establishment also was, as we have previously said, a place of meeting for innocent lovers. This circumstance was now turned against the old lady with singular *esprit*. Some of the marriages, practically, made up in the *magasin*, had by no means turned out so well as those which are proverbially made in heaven; and the details of many of them were alluded to by Mrs. D'Arcy, not only with singular freedom, but with powers of oratory which excited the surprise, almost the admiration, of Lord Festiniog. In fact, that most admirable and gentle housewife, Mrs. D'Arcy, ended, as his lordship afterwards rudely expressed himself to Lord Rhyader, without a single rag of character to cover her back. One transaction, involving 25,000 francs, a penniless duke in the employment of the later empire, and a young heiress, was so repeatedly alluded to, that Lord Festiniog lost the thread of the story in consequence of Mrs. D'Arcy's volubility, and he could not quite make out whether it was the wife who had exchanged into a regiment of turco for service in Algeria, or whether it was the husband who had burned men. It was made perfectly certain, however, by this young lady that they both cursed the day on which they saw Madame Mantalent.

Madame, however, seated now peacefully in Mrs.

Arnaud's easy chair, with a glass of curaçoa, let her grand-daughter scold herself into quiescence without doing anything but agreeing with a sardonic laugh to everything which the young lady said; occasionally correcting her when she appeared to soften circumstances, and saying '*bon! bon!*' when she made a more desperately ruinous assault on her reputation. Scolding cannot last for ever, as both ladies knew perfectly well; and Madame Mantalent, with the military genius of her nation, allowed her enemy to exhaust her resources before she attacked her in full force. Nay, she showed more than the usual military genius of the nation, great as it is. She combined it with that of such great generals as Fabius Cunctator, Frederick the Great, the Duke of Wellington in the last Spanish campaign, and General Grant in his advance upon Richmond. She chose her own time of fighting, the neglect of which rule has ruined both the Napoleons.

When Mrs. D'Arcy was quite exhausted, it became her turn to receive punishment, and by this time her husband was in the room, wondering what could possibly be the matter. The old lady had calculated on this with the subtlety of a Cleopatra or a Catherine de' Medici. In the most inexorable manner she overhauled the character of Heloise before her bridegroom in a way which made Lord

Festiniog desire to kill her. Heloise had been, in her way, a very considerable flirt, and had drawn a very great deal of money into the perfectly virtuous establishment of her grandmother without receiving any recognizable per-centage on the same. Still, she was a good girl, as her grandmother perfectly well knew. Every man she had spoken to as a friend was now made out to be a lover, and the old lady absolutely revelled in the disclosures which she thought she was making before a jealous English husband. The end was that Mrs. D'Arcy was reduced to somewhat spiteful tears.

It was becoming very distressing until D'Arcy came forward to his wife, and, kissing her kindly, burst into a laugh. 'She says, in effect, that the men all ran after you,' he said. 'Of course they did; I did; and, what is more, I have got you. Ah, Madame, you can't prevent that!'

'You have got a fickle heart and a bad temper, Mr. D'Arcy,' said the old lady. But D'Arcy only laughed at her, and went away pleasantly with Heloise.

'Good evening, Madame,' said Lord Festiniog. 'Mary, you must come upstairs with me at once; I have something to say to you which can wait no longer, though I wish that some other cause of delay would intervene before I tell it to you.'

'Come, then,' she said, leading the way. 'Here

are the bride and bridegroom toiling upstairs before us. Say a good word to them, as few, except you, can say it.'

'But it would be a liberty.'

'Not in the case of an old man like you,' she said. 'You can say anything.'

'Anything,' he thought, 'but what I have come to say. This horrible procrastination!'

He ran upstairs and touched D'Arcy's arm. 'Captain D'Arcy,' he said, 'I hope you will allow a very old man, like myself, to tell you, before your wife, that you have behaved like a most loyal gentleman in not paying attention to Madame Mantalent's objurgations.'

D'Arcy looked at him in calm wonder.

'Did you think such a thing possible, then, Lord Festiniog?'

'I could not say. I hope that I have not taken a liberty. But you behaved so very well, that, as an old man, I thought I might speak.'

'I am only too proud of your approval; but, indeed, I saw this little woman of mine in Paris under such difficult circumstances and temptations, that nothing would shake my faith in her now; not even Madame Mantalent's tongue.'

Lord Festiniog admired the young man's chivalry, and bade him good-night. From certain things which Madame had let drop,—'let drop,' we say,—

poured out in buckets,—he rather thought that his imperfect acquaintance with the French tongue, when spoken with extreme volubility and with a pure Parisian accent, had something to do with his complacence. However, here was Mary following upstairs; here was her room, and here was —— sitting in her chair, another Heloise, much older than Mrs. D'Arcy, and, in his opinion, considerably more beautiful.

'Oh, you are here, Clotilde, my dear soul. Grandma and Heloise have been quarrelling downstairs. Lord Festiniog, this is my cousin, Mademoiselle Clotilde Aubigné. Try to make friends with her, for she has been a loving friend to me.'

'Say no more, Mary, say no more,' said Lord Festiniog. 'We want a mutual friend to-night. I hope that Mademoiselle Clotilde will let me number her among mine.'

As she advanced towards him, offering her hand; as he looked at her matured, Madonna-like beauty —so like that of Heloise in feature and colouring, and so unlike it in its splendid repose—Lord Festiniog found a little monitor in his left breast, asking him if he was quite so old as he had represented himself to the D'Arcys on the stairs. Was that admiration for him in her eyes? 'No, I am not vain enough for that at my time of life,' he

said. 'It is only the reflection of my own admiration in hers.'

'Can this lady, in whom you have, as you say, the most entire confidence, stay with us while I tell you some very distressing news?'

'Yes, I would rather she did. God has sent her to me as a comfort, and why should she leave me? Clotilde, you will stay, will you not? Now, my dear papa, what makes you so grave?'

'Mary, you are a widow.'

'Yes,' she said, with a sudden movement of her hands.

'You are now a childless one.'

She looked at him steadily, and said,—'I do not understand you.'

'Your son George is drowned.'

'When I was trying to love him,—when I was hoping, hoping for his return,—when I was thinking of every good quality which his father possessed, and endeavouring to see them reflected in him? This is rather hard, is it not? It is cruel.'

'The sea is very cruel, Mary.'

'Ay! but God is more cruel than the sea itself. I was not prepared for this. Let me be quiet awhile. I would rather that no one spoke to me for a short time, if they did not mind.'

She bent her head over the fire, and Clotilde beckoned to Lord Festiniog to come and sit beside

her. He went to her, and she took his hand in hers, while she whispered in French:—'Good and admirable friend, what has happened?'

'Her son is drowned,' said Lord Festiniog. 'Drowned in the most noble manner, but at the bottom of the deep sea for all that. She will wish to know the particulars immediately. Stay with us, dear lady, while I tell them to her.'

He took her hand, and kissed it.

'I will stay with you by all means, my lord,' she said, 'but she will want an answer soon. She was getting to love the son so little known to her. Yes, my lord, she will be wanting an explanation soon, and I will stay with you. She has never said anything but good about you.'

Mrs. Arnaud rose and confronted them at this point. She was not in the least degree angry or *emportée* but she was terrible in her beauty for all that. Lord Festiniog was glad that he had such a protection in the gentle, though unknown, Clotilde, against the equally gentle, though better known, Mary.

'Lord Festiniog,' she said, 'I wish to say a few words. Did I ever seek an alliance with your house?'

'Certainly not, Mary.'

'Did I ever seek to intrude myself on you, until after I had discovered that I was legally married?'

'Certainly not, Mary. But you must remember——'

'I know. You and Rhyader were kind, believing me not to be legally married. When you could dispute the fact no longer, what did you do?'

'Acknowledged the fact, Mary; you cannot deny *that*.'

'Yes, after you were forced to do so. Drummond did that for me. I owe more to Drummond than I do to you, after all.'

'Mary! Mary!'

'I say it again, I owe more to him than I do to you.'

'But he stole your child.'

'Yes, and you have made away with him. At least, you come and tell me that he is drowned. He went to sea by your orders. Is Barri drowned?'

'No, but he is an idiot.'

'He never was anything else,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'I do not see why my son should be sacrificed, and Lady Rhyader's left in a mere state of idiocy. It is not just.'

'But you will not argue matters, Mary. You have lost your old sense. I cannot understand you. If I had been asked who was the most

sensible woman in London, I should have named you. I am utterly surprised.'

'I will go to bed,' said Mrs. Arnaud, wearily. 'I cannot stand this any longer. I will go back to a religious life. I am not fit for the world.'

And so, she left Lord Festiniog without any further recognition.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LORD FESTINIOG AND CLOTILDE.

LORD FESTINIOG and Mademoiselle Clotilde being left alone together, became at once confidential.

'You are an old friend, as I see, my lord,' she said. 'I have heard much of you.'

'Mademoiselle, if you will give me your confidence, I will value it like a mine of diamonds.'

'It is yours, with all my heart,' she said. 'She has not been a well used woman.'

'Certainly not,' said Lord Festiniog. 'My son Iltyd did not use her altogether well. For me, I behaved like a dog to her, once.'

'Your behaviour, my lord——' here she paused.

'Festiniog,' he suggested.

'I cannot pronounce *that*,' she said. 'I would if I could, but I can't. Say it again.'

He did so, and she made two or three attempts. They were no use, and she ended by saying that

she, for the sake of argument, would call him M. Bonnechose. He agreed to this, and she continued.

'Your behaviour, M. Bonnechose, was always very excellent to her. No one can find fault with you about it. She was married. Good. You did not know it. Good. You disputed it. That was right of you. Drummond had stolen her child. When that was proved and confessed to by Drummond, you allowed the fact. That was most honourable. But, were you good when you sent George Arnaud to sea with Barri? I do not think that you were.'

'But I did not know it. I did not know that the facts were proved.'

'Then I am misinformed,' said Mademoiselle Clotilde, 'that is all I can say.'

'Who was your informant?'

'Drummond,' she said.

'But, has he been making mischief between Mary and myself?'

'My lord, her position is this. He has told my cousin Arnaud, and she has told me, that since you have discovered the fact that George Arnaud is next in succession, you have been trying, in every way, to get rid of him. He will now say that you have succeeded in doing so; and, what is more, Marie might believe it.'

'But, is the man here, back in London, and saying such abominable falsehoods?'

'It is perfectly certain, and what is more, he has threatened your lordship in my presence.'

'The —— What does he threaten me with, then?'

'He only says that you are a lost man without him. He declares that your property is dependent on him, that you do not know where certain deeds are, and that you never dare to face him.'

'But when was he here last—yesterday?'

'No, this morning. He is in a very dangerous state. If I might detain your lordship, I would ask for a little advice. We want some, I assure you.'

'I will give you all that it is in my power to give,' said Lord Festiniog, 'but I must ask you again, what has Drummond been saying?'

'My lord, how can I say? He has been telling Mrs. Arnaud that you are not Lord Festiniog at all; that there is some matter of an old marriage which he has discovered; that there is—I know not what. I cannot tell you, for I do not remember the whole.'

'What has Mary said to this?'

'She has been calm as usual. I think that she has been prepared for a journey.'

'Indeed!'

'Yes; but you must come back to-morrow. Do not delay here now.'

Lord Festiniog decidedly agreed that he would come back on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CATASTROPHE.

LORD FESTINIOG went back to No. 17, and was extremely well received there, by no one better than by old Madame Mantalent. Whatever that excellent old lady's temper might be previous to and after the arrival of Lord Festiniog, during his stay in the house she was all sunshine.

A most pleasant, chatty old woman; slightly and lightly scandalous at first, until she saw that Lord Festiniog did not like it; then quite as scandalous as ever, but in a moral manner, and without any levity. She pulled everybody's character to pieces quite as charmingly as ever, but finding that Lord Festiniog was religious, she did it in a religious way, which was quite as poignant as the other way. She discoursed about the repentance, and ultimate (as far as she could tell) salvation of great sinners, with illustrative anecdotes, which became moral from the tone of voice in which she told them. She let Lord Festiniog know very soon that she had repented, and then,

treating him as a man on the verge of the grave, told him of what. His lordship told her that he was very glad to hear it, in fact, congratulated her. She received his congratulations with a smile, and hoped that he himself would some day find peace.

Madame always, during the short time which followed, treated Lord Festiniog as a repentant sinner, who might yet be saved. She never hinted at his turning Roman Catholic, or at his marrying her last importation from France, Mademoiselle Clotilde. She always vilipended her spiritual director as a noodle, and ordered Clotilde out of the room when Lord Festiniog came. Still, to use a vulgarism, she took her change out of Lord Festiniog, by pointing out to him that he was the author of all the woes of her family. Had he been kinder to Iltyd, Iltyd never would have made a secret marriage; had he acknowledged Mary Arnaud's marriage at once, she never would have been thrown against James Drummond (which was totally untrue); had he, in short, done anything but what he had done, George Drummond never would have been drowned, Barri would not have been an idiot, and the last horrible catastrophe never would have occurred at all. Lord Festiniog was, in spite of his better reason, obliged to admit that it would have been better for him if No. 17

had never existed, and far better for No. 17 if he had never come near it.

The last disaster which had befallen this most unlucky number in that most unhappy street is almost too terrible to be written down. Mary Arnaud had eloped almost openly with James Drummond. They had started together from the London Bridge Station; they had been tracked to Paris, and so to Vienna, with all the acumen of an associated European police. At the last-named town they were arrested, and discovered to be Lord and Lady Hartley on their wedding tour. A great deal of acrimonious correspondence followed on the subject of this arrest, both at the time of which we are speaking and afterwards; still, the fact remained the same; Mary Arnaud had gone off with James Drummond, and the ferocious virtue assumed by the injured family from Paris was an awful thorn in Lord Festiniog's side.

Why had they been pursued? Whose business was it to interfere with their arrangements? If Mary, who had lived so excellent and so virtuous a life, chose, at the end of it, to cast reputation to the winds, to go away with a man who had treated her in the most shameful manner, with the man who had actually stolen her child, now drowned, whose business was it, again? Why, no one's.

Drummond had played fast and loose with Lord

Festiniog, but Lord Festiniog had forgiven him, and, on the whole, was kindly disposed to him. He was not the first man, thought Lord Festiniog, who went to the devil after a woman.

'As the late Mrs. Crawley said,' he added, for he was old, rich, and virtuous, 'I like the man's devotion to Mary; it is a fine trait in the man's character.

'And Mary's devotion to Iltyd also,' thought his lordship, 'that is gone. A very good woman. I am sorry I ever quarrelled with her. Well, God forgive us all our sins. I 'll go to No. 17, and talk to them all.'

So he went, and heard more particulars. It was only after a second visit there that he heard the whole truth from Rhyader, who met him at the shop-door.

Mary Arnaud and James Drummond had not only gone off together, but had taken title and other deeds to the amount of two hundred thousand pounds with them. Hence, the hunt after them to Vienna—hence, the fact of the arrest of the innocent Lord and Lady Hartley, who were twenty years younger than either of them. And hence, the fact that Lord Festiniog, being persistently bullied by Lord and Lady Rhyader, was eternally at No. 17, very frequently, during the absences of Madame Mantalent, in the company of Mademoiselle Clotilde.

CHAPTER XXX.

AM RHEIN.

THE dawn comes flushing up over the brown-grey crags and the shattered castles, lighting them one by one, and creeping lower and lower down the iron cliffs which confine the mighty river, and hurl it in its anger from side to side of the glen. Wreaths of mist still linger among the closely-packed vineyards, and along the dark rift of the Switzerthal, which on the opposite bank sends its flashing, sparkling contribution of water into the great Rhine itself. The swine-herd's horn is heard, not unmusically, in the little town below, which is awaking to the tinkle of the bell for early mass. Now the sun reaches the river, and lights it with gleams of gold, green, and silver, most beautiful to behold; and now it has sketched out all the hills, and the solemn peace of the autumnal sabbath has settled down upon the beautiful Rhine lands.

Nowhere, neither on vineyard, on crag, on castle,

on church-tower, nor on wooded valley, rich with the purple saffron, did the sun shine with more pleasant radiance than on the crucifix on the hill above the town, where the copse and vineyards end, and the broad corn-fields clothe the level plateau as far as the eye can reach. Here four roads meet, and at the meeting-place is the little shrine, with the great figure above it, a landmark for some miles either in sunshine or in snow.

Only one figure was in sight on this morning, that of a woman kneeling in long devotion, with her head bent. So long did she remain in this attitude, that a little bird flew down and settled quite close to her, uttering a low, melancholy note. At length she rose, and turned her face towards the sunlight, looking round on the glorious prospect. It was Mary Arnaud.

Pale and harassed, but with a quiet, calm confidence in her face, which would have dispelled at once any fear of her, had it been seen by those most interested. The fresh morning air, and the pleasure of the landscape, put a slight colour in her cheeks, as she set her feet down hill towards the town.

Some of the earliest risers in the place were the patients of Dr. Holland, who had there, in the old convent of Marienburg, above the highest roofs, an establishment for people who were ill, or fancied themselves to be so. It was called a hydropathic

sanatorium, but it was a very agreeable place, with quite as agreeable a table d'hôte as any near. The guests on this morning had returned from their early walks or baths, and had sat down to breakfast with the voracious appetite gained by foreign air and early hours, and there was a short silence; but very soon conversation began, and ran mainly on one point, the arrival of Mr. Hickson and his *distingué* looking sister the day before. They were discussed from every point of view, and it was agreed that she, at all events, would do. If they could get no other entertainment out of her, they could speculate about her and copy her exquisite clothes to the best of their ability.

On one side of the doctor sat the father of the guests, a man of three seasons, a fat old gentleman from Porto Rico, and on the other the clergyman, a reverend London rector, a guest of two years. These two had the doctor's ear.

'And what shall you make of your new patient, doctor?' said Porto Rico.

'I am almost afraid I shall want your assistance,' said the doctor, turning to the reverend gentleman.

'Mind troubled?' said the reverend gentleman. 'Well, I have been used to sick beds for forty years, and I am ready for him.'

'I was not referring to spiritual consolation,'

said the doctor; 'I meant that I fear I shall have to ask you to read the burial service over him.'

'So bad as that. Poor fellow! poor fellow! Ay! ay!'

'I fear so. He is in a state of intense nervous depression, from which, if he does not rally—' The doctor said no more.

'How fortunate that he has a relation with him,' said Porto Rico.

'She is most devoted to him,' said the doctor. 'I should be almost powerless without her. She has had him in this state, or even worse, ever since Antwerp, and has only got him on by slow degrees. He would have died at Antwerp, were it not for her.'

'How did she manage to find us out, I wonder?' said the clergyman.

'I knew her in Paris,' said the doctor; 'I knew her family. And you two do me the favour not to talk about her at all; there are very painful family circumstances which render it as well not. Her brother has been living too hard, and also has met with some great disappointment. I can only say of her that she is the noblest of women.'

She entered shortly after he had finished speaking, and took her seat in the place which was left for her next the clergyman. She talked quite calmly about indifferent topics, the scenery, the

air, the river, and then, turning to the doctor, asked him what he thought of her brother's state that morning.

'I think it is extremely grave, madam,' said the doctor. 'Still, such unremitting attention as yours must do more than I can. He is very uneasy without you.'

'I have been away from him this morning,' she said, 'for a lovely walk. I will spend the rest of the day with him.'

She went back to his room, and the doctor came with her. There, on a sofa before a window which looked down upon the Rhine, lay the miserable wreck called James Drummond, trembling at every sound, and staring at them as they entered with dilated pupils and quivering lips. He tried to speak, but he only produced an inarticulate babble. With the aid of the doctor's and Mary's arm he tried to walk across the room, but his knees smote together and they were afraid of his fainting. The doctor made a little weak brandy and water for him, but at the sight of it he gave an inarticulate howl, dreadful to hear, and fell back on his couch.

'He has been so ever since Antwerp,' said Mary. 'He cannot bear the smell of the brandy.'

'Yes, I will try opiates,' said the doctor. 'When did the worst of this begin, did you say?'

'At Antwerp, the day I joined him. In fact, I found him in the state I have mentioned to you.'

'He must have had some violent shock, surely, in addition to his intemperate habits.'

'Well, he had,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'I was the cause of it.'

'H'm. Had you not better write home?'

'That is totally impossible,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'Rhyader, or possibly Festiniog, would be thrusting their hands in and ruining everything. I must take the sole responsibility. Will he die?'

'I cannot say, it is very doubtful.'

'Will he speak before he dies?'

'He may or he may not. One thing is certain, for a long time no subject in the least degree likely to agitate him must be broached. That would be death.'

'Then I must wait here and watch.'

'There is no doubt of that if you wish to have him speak again reasonably. But reflect again, madame, is there not one friend to whom you could confide?'

'Not one, doctor. I have no friend whom I could trust—who would not commit an indiscretion. I could have confided in my poor drowned son, but he was lost in saving his cousin. No, I must go through it myself.'

So she took up her watch alone and unaided,

and such a watch. Beside the couch of a man whom she had come to save, whose feeble hand, whenever it touched hers gave a gentle pressure which made her almost mad, whose eyes never met hers with an expression of tenderness and gratitude. Such was her watch, with the full sense that on his recovery, when she had wrested his secret from him, the poor wretch must be rudely undeceived as to her feelings for him, and by herself, —by no other.

He had come to her wild with drink and rage, and had made a terrible scene. She had lost her temper, and had spoken words to him as fierce as any of his own, and so they had parted, as she believed, for the last time; it was not so, however; they were bound to meet again, and that suddenly.

Five hours after she had parted from him, she got a letter from him telling her that he was ruined, but that he was determined to drag down others in his ruin; that he was mad, but that he would make some others as mad as he was. He had taken Lord Festiniog's title-deeds and securities to the value of two hundred thousand pounds, and was gone with them to America. One single word from her would stay him, even now, and it was to be sent by telegram to Gravesend, to a certain address.

She did not hesitate for an instant. She tele-

graphed the word 'yes,' and received in answer, 'Hôtel du Parc, Antwerp. Hickson.'

She went to his office, and told his head clerk that she was going to join his master for a tour on the Continent, and that his letters were to be addressed to Vienna. The head clerk had long suspected that something of the kind would occur sooner or later between Mrs. Arnaud and James Drummond, and was not at all surprised. He no more believed they were going to Vienna, than he believed that they were going to Timbuctoo, but, like a good servant, he wished to cover his master's retreat, and did so, to the confusion of the police. A short note from Drummond, dated Gravesend, informed him that his master had not only gone abroad, but had taken Lord Festiniog's securities with him; at which point in the plot, he considered it necessary to communicate with Lord Rhyader, and save himself.

Meanwhile, Mary had found out that there was but one boat to Antwerp by which he could go, and, taking a very hurried farewell of every one, she put herself on board of it. He joined the boat at Gravesend, and she kept close, watching him carefully with her veil down.

He was very ill, so ill that it seemed to require an almost desperate effort on his part to get to his cabin. He had no servant, that was a comfort.

His portmanteau was brought on board by the porters, and stowed with the other passengers' luggage. He went to his private cabin at once, and lay down. They were hardly out of the Thames before Mary Arnaud took the Belgian captain into her confidence. She told him that her brother was very ill, and that she had followed him. As he was undoubtedly very ill, the captain pitied her, and gave her every assistance in his power when they got to Antwerp. At the Parc she had taken possession of him entirely as his sister; but he was delirious, and did not know her.

His keys she had, but they revealed nothing. The papers were not in his trunks; that she very soon discovered. Where were they? No one knew, save the madman who lay gasping on the bed before her. The task before her was to save him until he could speak articulately and think consecutively. Then she knew that she could have his secret from him, for she was certain on that one point.

But his disease fought terribly against nature, and it was only against overwhelming odds that she got him to St. Goar. There, to her horror, the thing which she longed for, yet dreaded, happened; the man began to recognize her, and to try and call her by name, to press her hand, and, as he in

his vanity thought, to believe that she had relented after all.

She watched him like a sister, no sister was ever more diligent or more faithful to a brother. And yet she hated the man. She had set a certain duty before her,—that of recovering the lost papers for Lord Festiniog, 'who had been kind to her.' She knew perfectly well that if any of them interfered the papers would be lost; and so, silent and unassisted, she kept watch over the man she liked least in all the world.

He began to mend before the beginning of October, and she began to dread the scene which must ultimately come. But that scene, which she had so often featured to herself, never came at all. Half the evils of this world are purely imaginary. The curse of successful nations, like the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic, is the anticipation of evil, as may be seen in our everyday history, and is called familiarly, and somewhat foolishly, by the daily and weekly journals 'panic.' Mrs. Arnaud had prepared herself for a state of things which never occurred.

James Drummond got by degrees so much better that he came to the table d'hôte, and ultimately went out driving with his reverence and Porto Rico. On his return from one of these drives, he asked Mary to come to his room, as he wished to speak to her very particularly.

She came, and sat down by him, not daring to begin the conversation.

'Mrs. Arnaud,' he said, 'they tell me that you have been utterly devoted to me during my illness. You must perceive that I am not long for this world, and I wish to make a clean breast as regards you, for my memory has quite come back now.'

'Yes, I have pulled you through, James,' she said.

'James! Ah, well, it is all the same now. If that word had been said like that years ago, things might have been different. For what reason, Mrs. Arnaud, have you paid this remarkable attention to me?'

It was an awful question, an unanswerable question. Mrs. Arnaud sat dumb.

'I see that you cannot answer me. I thought for a while, during my delirium, that you had come after me for myself. Now that my intellect is restored, I know that you have only tended me to get the truth about Lord Festiniog's papers. So good a nurse should be properly repaid. You have ransacked my trunks, I suppose?'

Mary Arnaud was obliged to say 'Yes.'

'Thank you. If you will open that one nearest the window you will find everything you want. No, not there, my dear madam, nor there, neither; press that little spring on the lid. There you are.'

She stood up before him with the papers in her hand, but without a word to say for herself.

'Mary Arnaud,' he said, 'you are answerable for those papers now, not I. Take them back to the people whom you always loved better than you did me. You are absolutely heartless.'

'Because I could not love you!' she flashed out.

'No, I am not a loveable person. But you are so utterly deceitful. You have saved my life for a few weeks, and you have tended me like a sister or a saint. And for what? Why, to get those papers. I have no gratitude towards you at all; you may take them, and go to the devil with them.'

'May God forgive you, James Drummond, as I do,' she said, with the papers in her hand. 'Now, good-bye.'

'Stop, Mary,' he said, 'in decency's sake, stop. You must go through those papers, and give me a receipt for them. That is only fair.'

She was so silly and confused that she did it. She counted the papers, and gave a receipt for eight. The doctor and Porto Rico were called in to witness the document, which she left with him, and then she departed.

'Doctor,' she said to that functionary, 'I am going to England.'

'You cannot possibly take your brother, madam,' said he.

'I am aware of it; but I must go. Is his situation so critical?'

'I cannot tell at all. He may live to be eighty if he leaves off drinking *now*. I never thought that I should have pulled him through. I will take the best care of him.'

Mrs. Arnaud at once thanked him, and left the corridor with singular haste, the doctor thought. But the steamboat was nearly due, and she had to pack, a matter about which she was very nimble.

The steamboat did not come to the wharf, the Rhine was low that year. She put off in a boat, with her trunks, and scrambled on board. James Drummond got from his bed, and saw her go. He gave her *bon voyage*.

'Curse you, my lady,' he said. 'I have been angling at your worthless heels for too many years. You have tried to conceal your hatred from me, but you have not quite succeeded. You have been the cause of my drinking, a habit which never gave me any pleasure. I took to it because you scorned me, I leave it because you scorn me still. I think that I have prepared a nice little bed of nettles for you, madam, when you get home.'

The doctor came to see him later in the day. He was surprised to find his patient so much better. His patient entered into conversation with him.

'To what do you attribute my late illness, doctor?'

'To drinking.'

'Exactly. I have always hated it; and now I am going to give it up, for I never got any real pleasure from it.'

'It is time you did give it up,' said the doctor. 'You will not survive such another bout as this.'

'I know: it was that woman who has just gone, who drove me to it.'

'Your sister?'

'My sister! she is as much my sister as you are! She is one of the most swindling thieves in Europe. Has she paid her bill?'

The doctor thought it worth while to step down and inquire. Mary, certainly, in her haste, had not gone through that ceremony, and the doctor returned to inform him of the fact. The invalid laughed.

'You will find my cash-box in that trunk, doctor; bring it here and I will pay you.'

'My dear sir, there is no need to——' said the doctor.

'Bring it here, my dear sir,' said Drummond. 'Short reckonings make long friendships.' The cash-box was brought to him, and the key of it was at the top of his dressing-case. It was quickly opened.

The doctor saw on the top of a pile of bank-notes a yellow parchment, evidently very old. Drummond's trembling hand selected a note for 100*l.*, which he placed in the doctor's, begging him to carry on the account between them. The doctor received it gravely, and Drummond locked up the box with great rapidity. 'There is ten thousand or more here, doctor,' he said, 'but there are no thieves in Germany. I think that if you will send up Gretchen with some more of that draught, I will go to sleep.'

'Gretchen is in the kitchen,' said the doctor. 'If you do not mind new faces, I will send up the other woman; but, after all, I think that I had better bring you your sleeping draught myself.'

'It is all one to me,' said Drummond. The doctor gave it to him, and he went to sleep.

Drummond was fast asleep now, so fast asleep that he was nearly waking in eternity. Gretchen, the honest German woman, was really in the kitchen again, and had a hard day's work among the patients. The doctor met the 'new woman' on the stairs, and said to her, 'Carlina, you had better go up and sit beside Mr. Drummond.'

'Why do you call me Carlina?' she asked.

'It is your real name, is it not?' said the doctor, coolly. 'It is on your certificates.'

'Did the lady who has just left ever—?' said she.

'I should think it impossible,' said the doctor. 'I do not suppose that she would trouble herself much about you. I do not suppose that she has ever seen you.'

'I have taken good care about *that*,' said Carlina, as she walked upstairs *to her duty*.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE END OF JAMES DRUMMOND'S SCHEME.

CARLINA approached James Drummond's bed with a callous mixture of feeling regarding him. She had loved the man, and, in one way, loved him still. He had used her as his plaything first, and afterwards as his tool. She had submitted to him, worked for him, and betrayed him to Lord Festiniog. She had done everything she could to ruin him, and bring him once more to her feet. She had not succeeded. Mrs. Arnaud always stood like a good angel between him and her. She had worked about through crafty, secret ways to separate them, but that seemed, last, impossible. When Mary Arnaud followed James Drummond, she followed also, and hid herself in the house where they had taken refuge.

She listened to what they said to one another on the occasion which has been described above. She saw that Mary Arnaud had never loved Drummond, and that Drummond had ceased to love Mary Arnaud.

'His heart shall be mine again,' she said. 'I will get a new power over him. Somehow, I care not how. I listened to every word which passed between them, and if you—(here she addressed her *daimon*)—mean to tell me that he told her the whole truth, I will be burnt alive.'

So she entered the sick man's room. He was sleeping very quietly; there was not the remotest need for her to hurry herself. She knew from spying where his keys were. She took out his cash-box and examined it. There were about six thousand pounds in notes. She first took two hundred-pound notes for necessary expenses, then she took three, then she took four, and locked up the cash-box, virtuously refusing to take another farthing. She came of a very decent banditti family, and the honour of her family appealed to her strongly not to take more than was absolutely necessary. She had actually locked up the cash-box, when the Neapolitan blood of her mother came through her head like a wave, and told her to take the whole seven thousand pounds. But then the blood of her father, who was a Genoese, and consequently a calculating man, a trader, came to her assistance, and said, 'The doctor knows that there is nearly ten thousand pounds here; if you take it all you will be found out.' She invoked the Virgin for this suggestion, which doubtless

came from above. She opened the box, took out another hundred pounds, and felt transcendently virtuous.

Is she the only person in the world who has thought that she has made her peace with God by committing a small crime when she might have committed a greater one?

She went to look at the sleeping man. He was sleeping very quietly. She had been familiar with him in old times, and now she was but his nurse. He was lying, as she thought, uneasily, and she tucked his clothes in. A yellow old paper dropped from the tumbled clothes. She picked it up, and, taking it to the candle, read it through.

'You are one artful sinner, James Drummond,' she said. 'I see now why you got rid of that woman Arnaud in the way you did. After your illness you were tired of her. I can't think what you ever saw in her, myself. Now I have you in my hands, my lad. The doctor, when you unlocked the cash-box and gave it back, could never have seen this; even *he* would not have withstood the temptation. Why, this paper is worth a hundred thousand pounds.'

Well, we will deal with this wondrous paper afterwards. It was worth nothing, but James Drummond and Lord Festiniog both thought that

it was. Not to make any mystery, it was a grant of the whole Barri estates to Tom Killigrew, signed by Charles the Second. *There was no date,* and but one witness, whose name was undecipherable, but who had written pathetically under the word, 'Don't know what it is all about.'

She secured this paper, and then went to see after the sick man again. He was extremely quiet—so much so that she moved the bedclothes from his face. She looked at him only once—she had seen the thing before. She went down to the doctor at once, and said, 'I wish you to come up with me.'

The doctor came, but fifty doctors could not alter circumstances—James Drummond was dead.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LORD FESTINIOG'S CONFESSION.

THE present writer is not the only person who considers that the practice of confession, as carried out in certain communions, is a most objectionable thing. Still, there is much to be said for it by its admirers. It is used in almost all sects under various names. Some call it 'confession,' some 'religious advice,' some 'experiences of conversion.' All mean, *to a certain extent only*, the same thing—the desire to confide to some one else what is too great a burden for your own heart. Lord Festiniog was one of the last men to go to confession, and yet he did so most decidedly.

It comes to very much the same thing in the end. People want to tell the truth and get excused, even if they are not Catholics.

Lord Festiniog wanted confession and absolution most emphatically. He knew that he could find some one to whom he could pour out his

whole soul, and he knew that he could get excused, but he wanted to be absolved, and that his conscience told him that he could not very easily be.

There must be something very delightful in belonging to a religion which provides a not peculiarly literate man to answer for your sins. Lord Festiniog knew that no such easy-going faith was available in this world, but he got all that he wanted from a priest of the *Anglican* church—that is to say, confession and absolution.

It occurred to him, that as he was extremely vexed and worried in every way, he would go and walk in Pall Mall. Why he should have done so is no business of ours. Pall Mall is not a place for a disturbed spirit. Lord Festiniog belonged to the Reform Club, but he was so vexed that he walked into the Travellers' by mistake, went into the morning room, and took up a newspaper.

The porter had followed him.

'Are you a member, sir?' that functionary asked. 'I do not know you.'

Lord Festiniog was going to swear, but a soft voice at his elbow stopped him.

'You have come here to see me, Lord Festiniog, I think?'

'If you choose to put it so,' said Lord Festiniog

'Why—good gracious, it is Archdeacon Luxmore!'

'Let us come to the Athenæum,' said the archdeacon; 'we are both members there.'

And at the Athenæum Lord Festiniog made his confession to the archdeacon. We are about to betray the secrets of the confessional.

When they were settled comfortably, Lord Festiniog said, 'You know, my dear archdeacon, that I am a fool?'

'My religion and my training as a gentleman prevent my ever contradicting any one,' said the archdeacon.

'Exactly. If you like I will prove it to you,' said Lord Festiniog.

'I will take your word for fact, my dear friend,' said the archdeacon. 'I am inclined entirely to agree with you, without any proof.'

Lord Festiniog continued, in a tone which was at first cross, but which afterwards grew more genial and confidential,—

'I never had much education in the ways of the world. I spoilt my two boys, and let them do pretty much as they liked. Gervase always did as I wished him, though I have had words with *him* at times. Iltyd never cared very much about me, but I loved him the best of the two. Do you understand me?'

'Perfectly.'

'Well, Iltyd took his own way when he grew up. He married a milliner. Mary is a most remarkable woman, archdeacon. Few women like her. I thought that she was not really married, and that Iltyd had deceived her. I and my son Rhyader treated her like one of the family, and she was our humble servant. After twenty odd years, she flew out at us, defied us, and said, and, what is more, proved, that she was properly married at Leghorn.

'Good. We had a quarrel, but she won. And then comes the most remarkable part of the story. My lawyer, James Drummond, had access to her for business purposes in Italy, and fell in love with her; not in an ordinary way, but in a *mad* way. I will make matters as short for you as I can; but I must tell you that he was persistently *mad* about that woman, and that he stole her child, my own grandson, thinking by this means to engage her heart.'

'A curious way of doing it, was it not?' said the archdeacon.

'He thought,' said Lord Festiniog, 'that if she was left without any tie, she would be more easily won. He adopted the boy he had stolen, and brought him up. Now, the most astounding thing is this, archdeacon. Whether the man Drummond

managed it or not, I can't tell. After above twenty years of friendliness, that woman, Mary Arnaud, quarrelled with me. She started as a milliner at No. 17, Hartley Street, and the very first person she met in her house *was her own son*, whom she did not know from Adam.'

'How on earth did that happen?' said the archdeacon.

'I don't know,' said Lord Festiniog, 'but happen it did. I did not know that the young man was my grandson. How should I? I liked him well enough, and of course would have done anything for him. In the meantime I drowned him.'

'That seems a mistake as it stands,' said the archdeacon.

'I did not mean to do it,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I sent him abroad with Rhyader's son, as his tutor. He found out that he, in case of Barri's death, would be heir, and he—well——'

'Pitched the boy overboard?' said the archdeacon.

'Why, no; he drowned himself to save his rival.'

'A noble creature,' said the archdeacon. 'Well?'

'It is all very good to say "Well!"' said Lord Festiniog, testily; 'but everything is in the most infernal mess. Iltyd's son, who was called George

Drummond, is drowned. The boy Barri seems a hopeless idiot in consequence of the sufferings he went through in his shipwreck. Mary Arnaud, Iltyd's own wife, after twenty-five years of good behaviour, has bolted to the Continent with my family lawyer, taking papers to the value of 100,000*l.*; taking, in fact, one which could not be replaced, and which would utterly ruin me if it was discovered.'

'What could that be?' said the archdeacon, for priests are curious.

'Well, my dear sir, if that paper was correct, I am no more Lord Festiniog than you are the Pope of Rome. This is safe with you?'

'Certainly; I am accessory after the fact,' said the archdeacon. 'Proceed in the tale of your wrongs.'

'I think that I ought to be treated with more respect by Rhyader, and I have fallen in love. At seventy—what do you think of that? What advice do you give me?'

'You seem to have made a tolerable mess of it among you,' said the archdeacon. 'If I was in your place I should most certainly do nothing. What is the missing paper, and who is your new lady-love?'

'Well, never mind about the lady; I may get over that business; I have done so once or twice

before. The paper is a grant of all we hold to the Killigrews by Charles the Second.'

'That,' said the archdeacon, 'is dangerous; and you should not have told me. However, I will shrive you on condition that you do the right.'

And what was that?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SURPRISE FROM MADAME MANTALENT.

LORD FESTINIOG had long ago decided that life would be worth having were it not for its troubles. At nearly the same time Cornewall Lewis had come to the conclusion that life would be possible without its pleasures. Victor Hugo would make out that they both meant the same thing. But we are not so clever as Victor Hugo, and are perfectly certain that they meant something entirely different. Lord Festiniog desired quiet, diligent action, and Sir George Lewis did not. Lord Festiniog said always that the women were driving him to the deuce in his old age. Sir George Lewis never said anything of the kind.

Lord Festiniog, however, had very hard times. He was sitting one evening with Mademoiselle Clotilde at No. 17, when the door was opened, and the renegade Mary Arnaud walked in, and, without the least remark, took off her bonnet, placed it

on the sofa, and requested Lord Festiniog to poke the fire. She then sat down.

'I want some tea,' she said to Clotilde; 'I have been travelling.'

Clotilde departed with amazing alacrity, and left Mary and Lord Festiniog alone together, to his immense horror. He felt that an explanation must come, and he hated explanations.

'Well, my lord,' she began, 'I think that I have made everything right for you. Here are the papers.'

'The papers which you took, Mary.'

'The papers which I took? I think you mean the papers which he took. I got them from him. Here they are.'

'I thought that you had been false to me,' said Lord Festiniog.

'Then you must be a noodle,' said Mary Arnaud. 'Look at these papers. They are, I fancy, correct. After trusting me so many years, you might trust me for a few more.'

Lord Festiniog looked at her with admiration, and then he went through the papers. 'Mary,' he said, 'you only went with the poor fellow who is dead to get these papers for us.'

'I do not understand you, my lord. I went with him to get these papers. I allow that. That I was true to Iltyd—I neither insult myself nor you by

going further with the matter. I got these papers from him: but you speak of him as dead. I left him mending.'

'I have had a telegram which tells me that he is dead, however.'

And Lord Festiniog watched her carefully, to see how she would take the news.

'Poor James,' said Mary Arnaud, without a show of emotion; 'and so he is dead. Poor fellow. He loved me very tenderly, and I liked him, to some extent. But I am not sorry that he is dead, on the whole.'

'My dear Mary—'

'Your dear Mary! Has not the man been the very bane of my whole life? A falser friend never existed, neither to you nor to me. Can I possibly pretend to a regret which I do not feel? Are you sorry?'

'You are so terribly blunt,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I don't mean to say that I am very sorry.'

'Then, what do you suppose I am,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'at the removal of the irritation of my life? Lord Festiniog, do you know that when I left him he hated me?'

'Perhaps,' thought the old man, 'that may have something to do with your singular coolness about him.' And he quietly went over the abstracted papers.

'The only paper which was of any vast value,' said he, quietly, 'is not here; your errand has been perfectly fruitless, I am sorry to say. He lied roundly, and has utterly deceived you. The paper which would ruin us is missing.'

'I thought that he was rather easy with me,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'What is to be done now, in the name of goodness? Has he destroyed it, do you think, in spite?'

'I wish to heaven he had,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I was a fool to keep it so long, I know that. If Rhyader knew of it! But he cannot have destroyed it; it would be a most friendly action.'

'Well, I don't know what is to be done *now*,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'He knew the contents of this paper, of course.'

'Why, of course he did, my dear soul, he *found* it, and pointed out its value to me. Don't you know that he said to you once that I was not Lord Festiniog at all? If another family gets hold of that paper I am poorer than the poorest beggar who whines for pence at a crossing. If it is known that I had it in my possession, and was ever aware of its contents, I should be utterly disgraced as well as ruined. In God's name keep all this from Rhyader—don't let a soul alive know of what has passed between us.'

'How charmingly you look to-night, dear Lord Festiniog,' said a voice, which made them both start to their feet, with an exclamation of terror from the lady, and a loud oath from the gentleman.

There, behind them, stood old Madame Mantalent, charmingly dressed and smiling; they were absolutely dumb with utter horror.

'I have been listening to you two for the last five minutes,' she said, 'and have heard every word you uttered. I am a most unscrupulous listener; I learnt the habit at my *magasin* in Paris, where, to tell the truth, I made money by it. The instant I heard Marie's voice in the passage, I pulled my old rheumatic bones upstairs, and here I am. You, Lord Festiniog, look as though you wished that I was anywhere else.'

'Madame, I have not that power of concealing my thoughts, which is possessed in such an eminent degree by your charming nation, and by no member of it more than yourself. I wish, Madame, you had been at—(he was going to say Jericho, but substituted)—Paris before you had heard what you have.'

'My lord,' said the old woman, with a strange, indescribable radiance in her face, which utterly puzzled and surprised Lord Festiniog; 'my lord, try to recall what I *have* heard.'

'You have heard me confess my own dishonour, madam.'

'Ay?' cried the old woman, 'and I have heard my daughter vindicate *hers*, and so, what is yours to me? My own long-suffering Marie, take your mother's blessing, and try to forgive her for ever distrusting you.'

They were between the door and him, and so Lord Festiniog was obliged to escape to the window, against which he leant while there was silence in the room, broken only by a few sobs.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LORD FESTINIOG'S COURTSHIP.

'Now, my dear people,' said Madame Mantalent, sinking quietly on the sofa, 'we three had better put our heads together over this business. This paper must be got hold of and burnt. I have managed a few things in my time, and I fancy that you could not have a better adviser.'

'Madam, certainly not!' said Lord Festiniog, 'but you must perceive, from what I have let fall, that my honour is in your hands. I can move no further in the matter. My hands are clean about it (which was a fiction). I cannot tell what I shall do.'

'There is one thing you will not do,' said Madame Mantalent; 'you will not act, or speak to Lord Rhyader, or any other human being, until you have consulted with us. You will promise that?'

Lord Festiniog thought for a little; at last he said,—'Yes, I will promise that, I think that I can say that much.'

'To be sure,' said Madame Mantalent; 'and come to us to-morrow morning. We will do nothing until we see you, you may depend upon that.'

So Lord Festiniog went.

He knew that he was partly consenting to a dishonourable action. He most entirely thought that his son Rhyader would have gone at once to the other family, and told the whole truth to their utter ruin. Yet he could not determine what to do. As he went downstairs, there was nothing, as it appeared to him, staring him in the face but utter, sheer ruin. He was not like a man beside himself, because old training had given him the habit of keeping his thoughts to himself, but he was utterly and entirely at his wits' end.

As he came into the hall, Clotilde came to meet him with a light.

'My lord,' she said, 'come into the little back parlour, which is now empty, and speak to me; I see from your face that you are in great trouble, you must let me share it.'

He followed her in, and sat beside her on the sofa.

He came very near her, but she did not seem to object in any way whatever. He took her hand in his, and she did not withdraw it; and then he made a fool of himself, not for the first time in his life.

'Clotilde,' he said, 'I am a very old man, is it in any way possible that you can love me? I will try to make you—'

'You need not try,' said Clotilde. 'I do love you beyond any other man in the world.'

'But, Clotilde, some terrible things have happened. I dare not ask you for your hand until—until—I know not when.'

'For my hand!' said Clotilde, wondering, 'you have got it, have you not—at least, my right hand? You shall have the other, if you like.'

'I mean your hand in marriage.'

She stared at him, but without withdrawing her hand. 'Why, you never thought of marrying *me?*'

'I certainly did.'

'My dear lord, pray banish the idea at once and for ever. I like you better than any man I have ever seen, except my grandfather, who was very like you, though I fancy he had more of the grand air than even you have. Come, there is a kiss for you, grandpapa. If I ever marry any one, I will ask you to give me away. But I fancy, myself, I do not care about a husband—husbands and wives perpetually disconcert one another; there is only one other man in the world who can make himself a worse nuisance to a woman than her husband.'

'Who is that?' said Lord Festiniog; 'her brother?'

'Oh, no! her lover,' replied Clotilde. 'Brothers are by no means objectionable. If you quarrel with them you can make it up again; and, even if you do not, they never shoot themselves, or another man, or, what is still more important, yourself. Husbands and lovers are a mistake. Now, we will be real friends.'

'Certainly,' said Lord Festiniog, and before he had any time to say more, she went on,—

'Look at D'Arcy and Heloise, I would not change places with her, although she has become Lady Hartop. Nobody cares to receive her, because she kept shop here. No, every one is not so generous as you are, Lord Festiniog; we will be friends, if you please, but nothing else.'

'Well! well!' said Lord Festiniog, 'I would have made you happy, in my way. Be happy in your own.'

'My dear grandpapa,' said Clotilde, 'will you have the goodness to consider what a life we should have led with the Rhyaders if we had ever married?'

'Hah!' said Lord Festiniog. 'Well, my dear—yes—I did not think of that. It is better as it is; oh, yes! it is far better as it is, though he did urge me once.'

'Now, then, we are comfortable,' said Clotilde. 'Tell me now, as we are in entire confidence, what is going on upstairs?'

'But I promised not to mention the matter to any human being, if I recollect.'

'If you don't tell me all about it, I will tell Rhyader that you proposed to me,' said Clotilde.

Lord Festiniog forgot, at once, his duties as senator, father, and gentleman. He told Clotilde every word of what had passed upstairs, but bound her to secrecy as regarded every other human being in the whole world.

'I shan't tell anybody,' she said. 'I wish it had been possible to tell Heloise, for she is the most artful little minx in the world; but she has made the mistake of marrying, and is therefore unworthy of confidence. She would tell her husband. You had better leave the matter with those two souls upstairs.'

'I suppose I had better for the present, but I am sorely puzzled, and I dare not tell Rhyader. You have been a kind friend to me, Clotilde—'

'And have prevented you making a fool of yourself,' she added.

'Hardly yet,' said Lord Festiniog, 'that still depends on the powers above, and he pointed accidentally with one of Clotilde's fingers, and not his own, to the upper storey, where Madame Mantalent and Mrs. Arnaud were seated in conclave.

At this moment there came a loud knock at the

door. They drew suddenly apart and were silent.

This last incident may appear strained and improbable to those critics who do not reflect that the same thing happens in most London houses at least once in five minutes, and that they had been talking for at least twenty *without* its happening. The improbability of the thing lies in its not having happened before.

Some people were in the passage asking for Lord Festiniog. 'By heaven,' that nobleman exclaimed, 'they are coming in here.' And, indeed, Rachel opened the door, and admitted Mrs. Arnaud's colly dog, before heard of in these pages. Clotilde, with the fervour of her nation, at once caught him to her bosom and carried him to the opposite sofa. But that did not prevent Rachel announcing Lord Rhyader and Mr. Barri; nor did it prevent Lord Festiniog from sitting bolt upright, with an expression on his face like that of a man who has robbed a bank, and is fully conscious of having the whole proceeds on his person when he is arrested by the police.

Suppose that terrible old Mantalent was to hobble into the room now, and make some frightful disclosure before she could be stopped. Suppose she ever were to know the frightful nonsense which he had been talking to Clotilde.

Suppose—well, he supposed everything which a guilty man will when he fears dectection, and he looked such a perfect noodle that his own son scarcely recognized him.

'How are you, father?' said Lord Rhyader.

'I don't know,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I thought I did this morning, but I 'll be hanged if I do now.'

The boy came towards him, but very unsteadily. Lord Festiniog met him and put him on the sofa beside him. 'This is one of your bad days, Barri, eh?'

'Yes,' said Barri, 'one of the days when everything goes round. But I am getting very much better, grandpa. I am beginning to read a little again now. You will never make a man of me, but you may make a scholar. Poor George Drummond, he died to save me, though it was against his interest. My heart would break with joy if I saw him again.'

'We will not,' said Lord Rhyader, 'pursue that subject. George Drummond is drowned. Barri, go upstairs and see Madame Mantalent: who, the servant tells me, is there.'

'No!' said Lord Festiniog, sharply, 'send the boy into the street to walk about. Mademoiselle Clotilde, would you mind leaving us, and taking the dog with you?'

He went, and he opened the door for her, kissed

her hand. He then sat down, looking anything but a noodle now, and confronted his son.

'Are you going to marry *that* lady, sir?' said Rhyader, haughtily, thereby putting the battlefield entirely in his father's hands.

'No, sir!' said Lord Festiniog. 'I asked her to marry me just now, and her answer was at once dignified and sensible. She pointed out the difference in our ages, and, what is more, she showed what extreme opposition I should meet with from you. I desired to marry that lady, sir, and I asked her. She has refused me.'

'She is a young lady of great sense,' said Lord Rhyader.

'That is a civil thing to say to your own father, sir,' said Lord Festiniog, who above all things wished to get into a passion, with some show of reason. 'I do not see that I have done anything to give you reason to insult me.'

'My dear father—'

'There, enough, sir, you can go. I desire to hold no more communication with you at the present moment. I am using every endeavour to keep a house over your head, and I am met in this way.'

'But I assure you, my dear lord—'

'I am not,' said Lord Festiniog, now nearly laughing, but taking a lesson from the school of

Mademoiselle Clotilde, 'to be pacified by endearments, however plausible. I request you to leave me, sir, and to believe that I am working for your good.'

'I cannot understand it,' said Lord Rhyader; 'why have you turned against me suddenly, after so many years?'

'Rhyader, go away. There is more hatching in this old No. 17 than you dream of or must know about.'

Lord Rhyader thought it best to go; and as he led poor struggling Barri along he thought, very sadly, that his father was losing his head, and that he would soon be master of the family.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MADAME MANTALENT GOES ON THE WAR TRAIL.

'MAMMA,' said Mrs. Arnaud, when they were alone together, 'did you actually suspect me?'

'My love, I did.'

'Then you must make amends.'

'Yes, in what way?'

'First, you must in future be kinder to all of us than you have hitherto been; and secondly, you must assist us by the whole power of your brain.'

'I promise both things, my darling. Now let us get to work at once, and lose no time. From whom did Lord Festiniog get this telegram announcing James Drummond's death?'

'From Dr. Holland.'

'I suppose that the dead man must have told him to telegraph to his lordship, then. You know more about the late man than any one else: had he any relations?'

'None, that I am aware of.'

'What sort of a man is Dr. Holland? An upright man?'

'One of the noblest and most upright of men,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'That is a terrible nuisance. It is the way of the world. You can find rogues enough when you don't want them, and then when you want one particular man to be a rogue, you find him an honest man.'

'Why do you desire him to be dishonest, mamma?'

'It is fortunate that your mother was born before you, simpleton,' said the old lady. 'Do not you see that by this time he has made an inventory of the dead man's goods, and has the paper in his possession?'

'That is perfectly true,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'How long were you there with him, did you say?'

'About a fortnight.'

'What did you represent yourself to be?'

'His sister.'

'Cannot you go back in the same capacity, and take possession of everything? Why of course you can.'

'I am sorry to say that we are checkmated there again,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

'Why?'

'That woman Carlina, who helped him to take George from me at Ravenna, had followed him

there, and she would be pretty sure to tell the truth, if it was only to spite me.'

'That does not follow,' said madame. 'Post away and try; you can do no harm by that. Go and see how the land lies.'

'It is rather a difficult thing for me, but if you advise—'

'I'll tell you what,' said the old lady, 'I'll go with you.'

'My dear mamma, with your rheumatism!'

'I shall howl occasionally,' she said coolly; 'you will explain the reason of that to our fellow-voyagers if they exhibit any symptoms of terror or alarm. All my pain will be amply compensated for if I can have the opportunity of matching my art against a woman. You are an excellent woman, but you are a nigaude, my dear. This Italian woman may be worth talking to. I daresay that she will give us a vast deal of difficulty, but all that will be intense pleasure to me. I only live in a world of excitement. Get the things ready, and we will start to-morrow morning.'

'But what are we going to do?' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'It seems fearfully like a conspiracy.'

'It *is* one, my dear,' said Madame Mantalent. 'But you must help in it. The family were very kind to you. And moreover, you can scarcely help yourself, because by representing yourself as the

dead man's sister, and getting possession, with your usual cleverness, of every paper but the right one, you are deep in it already.'

This was obviously true, and Mrs. Arnaud abandoned herself to her fate, only remarking to her mother that they must be very careful, or that they would find themselves in Coldbath Fields prison.

Madame Mantalent assented to this. 'It shows you, my dear,' she said, 'how extremely careful we should be. Don't commit yourself and don't sign anything. Allow me to observe that it is not good *ton* to speak to a woman with chronic rheumatism (and that woman your own mother) of Coldbath Fields. It is sufficient of itself to bring on a violent lumbar attack.'

'Well, mamma, I trust you, and I will do everything you tell me. I have given you very much trouble in my life, and I will try to be dutiful now.'

'The result of which, my dear, will be that we shall probably end our days in jail. English jails are, I believe, very insufferable, but they cannot possibly be worse than the streets of London. In jail, my dear, there are neither shoeblacks, costermongers, nor whistling boys. If they place a shoeblack outside my cell, I have about me, in my stockings, the means of putting an end to an exist-

ence which Providence evidently had decided to have lasted too long.'

'But you don't carry poison in your stockings, mamma,' said Mrs. Arnaud, anxiously.

'Far from it, my dear. I only speak as a milliner. From my knowledge of textile fabrics I could hang myself in my stockings most dexterously, that is all.'

'I could easily cut you down, mamma,' said Mrs. Arnaud, anxious to keep the old lady in good humour.

'My dear, no,' she replied. 'I get my stockings from a French firm, not from an English one. Go down and see if Lord Festiniog has gone.'

The report was that Lord Festiniog had been gone a long time. That Lord Rhyader had been there with Barri. That Clotilde was waiting supper, and that everything was quiet. Madame Mantalent descended to the little back parlour in better humour than she had been in for some years.

The aged female warrior scented a battle. The quarrel was none of hers, but the fighting was by no means less pleasant for that. In the middle ages Italians, Germans, Poles, Swiss, nay even it is said English, Scotch, and Irish, used to take part in wars with which they had logically no connexion whatever. Mr. Dugald Dalgetty had no personal quarrel with any human being, and had very few

political ideas. Madame Mantalent wished well to her species, but she liked fighting them. She was hungering for a battle when she came down to supper. She had made a grand *pax* with Mrs. Arnaud, which she intended to keep—in the first place because she really admired her; in the second place because she had got to love her; and in the third place because she was dead afraid of her. She argued that from her late conduct you could never tell what Mary Arnaud would do next; she was like a fire or torpedo ship, and Madame Mantalent wished to be in command.

At the same time it was not to be supposed that the old lady had got rid of her temper all at once; she wanted an object for it, and she discovered one in Clotilde. When she had eaten her supper she ordered off Mrs. Arnaud to pack up, and then asked Clotilde, in the presence of Rachel, who was clearing away,

'Are you going to marry Lord Festiniog?'

'No.'

'Has he asked you?'

'Yes.'

'You are a fool, if ever there was one in this world. All my family appear to be idiots.'

Mrs. Arnaud suddenly appeared in the doorway. 'Mother,' she said, 'what did you promise?'

'Right, child,' said the old lady. 'Clotilde, I am

sorry for what I said. Rachel, there is the baker ringing at the door-bell. Clotilde, put me to bed, for I cannot disguise from you, my dear, that Marie and I are bound for a long journey to-morrow.'

Clotilde took her aunt to bed, helped to undress her, and tucked her in. This took a considerable time, because, although the old lady was by no means 'made up,' yet—well—she had the habit of making a long toilet, both when she went to bed and when she got out of it.

On this occasion her toilet was assisted by a character which has scarcely appeared in these pages: Mrs. Arnaud's colly dog, the one which was sent to her from the religious house in which she had lived so long. Rover got on the old lady's bed when she was putting that finishing touch to her hair, which some old ladies consider necessary before they go to sleep, lest, we suppose, death should overtake them before they awake, and hurl them into eternity with their hair out of curl. Rover, we say, got on the bed and licked her face. The old woman did not hit him with her hair-brush, but spoke kindly to him. She noticed that Rachel was in the room, and asked her to put her pillow straight; this from her was a compliment.

'A long journey to-morrow, Rachel,' she said; 'and then the long journey of all. You will try to remember me kindly, Rachel, will you not?'

Rachel was about to reply, when Mrs. Arnaud entered suddenly. She was very pale, and her eyes were a little dilated, but she was perfectly firm.

'Clotilde and Rachel, go upstairs. By this door. Leave the dog.'

They went, and she sat on her mother's bed. The dog growled, but she laid her hand on his neck, and he was pacified.

'Mother! mother!' she said. 'What shall we do now? There is a message from the sea.'

'I always believed that there would be,' said the old woman, rising in her bed. 'I have dreamt of it, and prayed for it. Where is he?'

'Will you let the man come in and speak for himself?'

'What, George?'

'No, only a sailor.'

'Let him come at once,' said the old lady. 'A Frenchwoman who knows how to manage her complexion is afraid of no man.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHAT MADAME MANTALENT DID WITH HER WATCH.

FEW contrasts ever seen in this world could ever have been greater than that between the old Frenchwoman sitting up in her bed, and the sailor who came into the room. Her complexion was like a very pale rose—his was very much like a rather badly burnt brick. But they had something in common: they both had grand bold black eyes; and Mrs. Arnaud, standing in an atmosphere composed of eau de cologne on the side of her mother, and bad tobacco on the side of the sailor, came to the conclusion that neither of them were particularly afraid of anything.

'Madam,' said the sailor, 'I hope I see you well.'

'I am rheumatic, sir,' she said; 'but otherwise perfectly well. I am bound for a journey to-morrow. Will you state your intelligence?'

'I come to speak of Mr. George Drummond, madam,' said the sailor. 'He requested me to

come, in case I should escape. He said that his relations lived here, and I have done as he told me.'

'You see, sir,' said Madame Mantalent, 'his grandmother and his mother, pray proceed.'

'When the "Newcastle" was lost, madam, I stayed with him and with the captain. When she went down—we all three on the same piece of wreck—and a very few hours passed before we were seen by two ships. They both bore down upon us at once. One, apparently homeward bound, got nearer to us quicker than the other, but passed a little to leeward. I left the spar and struck out for her, because I wanted, as a poor man, to get home. The captain and Mr. Drummond, not being such active swimmers as I am, preferred to risk being taken up by the other ship, and I saw them both taken on her deck, apparently safe and sound. I expected to have been home long ago, but, with my usual luck, the Italian barque which picked me up lost her foremast, and was driven out into the Atlantic by the easterly wind which followed the gale. We were glad to make the west coast of France before we were right. Here I got a berth back to the Mediterranean, and telegraphed to my wife from Brest. The French people made such a mess of my English that she never understood any more than that I was alive, and as our owners had paid her as if I was

dead, she didn't bother them. But, to make a long story short, both the captain and Mr. Drummond were taken safe on board an outward bound ship.'

'But did she not signal her name?' said sharp Madame Mantalent.

'She did, madam, but I fairly tell you that if she had I should not have remembered it. I was very much knocked about by the sea. I can only repeat that Mr. Drummond was perfectly safe when I saw him last.'

'On board the outward bound ship?' said Madame Mantalent.

'By no means, madam. I have seen Mr. Drummond since. I have seen him at Bordeaux. He is coming to England as fast as he can, but his leg was broken, it seems, and, for some reason or another, he seems in no hurry.'

'There is no great reason for him to hurry,' said Madame Mantalent. 'Well, sir, we are very much obliged to you. Would you kindly aceept my watch? It is a Brequet, and of no use to you, I dare say, but you can exchange it for an English chronometer, you know. So, good bye.'

'Stop one moment, sir,' said Mrs. Arnaud, speaking to the sailor, with Madame's watch in his hand.

'Did Mr. Drummond tell you by what route he was coming home? I am his mother, and I wish to see him.'

'I can tell you that, madam, I think,' said the sailor. 'He was coming through the Alps, and down the Rhine.' And so the sailor departed.

'What are we to do now, mother?' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'Is there any use for my trying to intercept him?'

'Not the remotest, my dear. He would be of no earthly use in any way whatever. You and I have to commit what the world would call a crime together; and, to tell you the truth, I would rather that your son was out of the way at this moment. He is alive, and that is enough for you. Let him go. You and I must hunt in couples, and get that paper back. I think we owe that to the family. We will start to-morrow morning.'

The intelligence of the declaration of a most bloody war, or the result of a University boat-race, generally arrives at some parts of Her Majesty's dominions long before the fact has scientifically taken place. The telegraph has set back the dial of Ahaz. Science triumphs when she tells us that things are known in Constantinople before they have (chronologically) happened in England. The sun is too slow for us. The University race is, according to Calcutta time, rowed at midnight, and they get the result of it on their breakfast-tables in the early morning, just when our children are being put to bed.

Mrs. Arnaud and Madame Mantalent started early in the morning to catch Carlina, and bargain with her about the lost paper. Neither of them had travelled very much, and they thought that they were making good speed.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MADAME MANTALENT DEFEATS ENGLAND AND PRUSSIA.

In due course of time they arrived at St. Goar. Madame had behaved very well, and was singularly gracious. She occasionally showed slight symptoms of rheumatism by giving wild yells in improper places, but she was very amiable. At Aix-la-Chapelle she howled in the middle of high mass, and being asperged with holy water by a priest on her back, for the purpose, as he afterwards explained, of driving the evil spirit out of her, shook her fist in secret, and said words about the Roman hierarchy which we decline to repeat, both on religious and on political grounds. Ultramontane as madame most emphatically was, she uttered words which are more fitly left, in our opinion, to the ear of her spiritual director than to that of our readers. She simply expressed her opinion about the too liberal use of holy water in a way which might have satisfied the gentleman who

is traditionally supposed to have an extreme horror of it in any form. The fact is, that she referred the ministering priest personally *to* that gentleman. It was a mistake on her part, clearly; but we only say that Madame Mantalent behaved, for her, like an angel.

Mary Arnaud was always good-natured. She was a trifle colourless, perhaps, but she was always resolute enough and good-natured enough. She had a way of viewing life which was a little different to that of ordinary people. Nothing would ever have induced her to commit a crime for herself, but she did not hesitate to do anything very strange indeed for those she loved, and who had been kind to her. Of course she ought to have been a heroine, and have refused to act in the matter of this paper; but alas! she was no more of a heroine than old Madame Mantalent, who would, now her blood was up, have most willingly injured Carlina and half-a-dozen more people who stood in her way.

You are angry with Lord Festiniog. He behaved shamefully, there is no doubt about that. His duty was perfectly clear. He should never have concealed that paper, in which he believed. He should have done his duty. He should have put it in the hands of the family, and have gone out into the world a beggar; leaving Rhyader, his

wife, Barri, and George Drummond without one solitary penny in the world. But he was a very immoral old man, and he did not see his way to doing it.

It may be supposed that, with an honest old gentleman like Lord Festiniog, there was some mental struggle about the matter. That he thought he was doing wrong, is perfectly certain, but there was no mental struggle whatever. He was called upon, as he thought, to give up so many thousands a year, which his family had enjoyed, not entirely without benefit to the State, for two centuries. He determined most emphatically not to do it, and he invoked a malediction on his own head, similar, though rather stronger than that used by Madame Mantalent in the Dom Kirk of Aachen, if he did anything of the kind.

His idea was that the deed would be brought to him, and that he could buy it. He had a faith about that, because the deed was worth more to him than to any one else. He let the two women go to see what they could discover, and, with a degree of cowardice, stopped at home himself, to see what they could do.

The women were avenged on him; they had considerably better times than he had. Had that excellent old lady, Madame Mantalent, known, while she was travelling up the Rhine with her

daughter, what a tremendous pickle Lord Festiniog was in at No. 17, I am afraid that her amiability would have become angelic. It was one of the great points in that sainted woman's character that she was always most cheerful when she saw her fellow-creatures in distress. She would have *loved* Lord Festiniog had she known the state of affairs at No. 17. She would have given him money. She would have lent him her air-cushion. She would have sat by his bedside till he swore at her, and then have sat like a saint. Alas! she never saw Lord Festiniog in his agony. She would have given all she was worth for it, but it was denied her.

They arrived at St. Goar. Mrs. Arnaud took rooms, and then went to see the doctor. He was in his room, and she knocked at the door. They interchanged greetings, but Mrs. Arnaud saw at once that the doctor was cool.

There was a little indifferent conversation about the death of James Drummond, and then she said,—

'I have come mainly about my poor brother's papers and effects.'

'Mrs. Arnaud,' he said, 'I am very sorry to say that I cannot put myself in communication with you on the subject. Before I give up one single paper you must swear before the Mayor that you are his sister.'

'I can't do that,' said Mrs. Arnaud, promptly. 'I would if I could, but I cannot. I am not his sister. Now you have the whole truth.'

'Good!' said the doctor. 'Are you any relation to him?'

'No. May I look through his things?'

The doctor hesitated, and then said,—

'Mrs. Arnaud, you inspire such confidence, that I will do wrong and say yes.'

'God bless you for that,' said Mary Arnaud. 'Come, I will tell you this much of the truth. The man loved me, but I could never love him. He did me the most irreparable wrong that man could do to woman, yet I was kind to him at last.'

'Most kind. He did not marry you?'

'Sir,' she said, 'you utterly mistake me. He did me a wrong inconceivably greater than the one of which you are thinking. He got me away alone after Iltyd's death, and he stole my child, with the assistance of that woman, Carlina, who is here now. It was done at Ravenna, and that woman knows it. I forgave him because he, for my sake, brought the boy up as his own son; and the boy is alive, and, I hope, will live to comfort my old age.'

'Will you, Mrs. Arnaud,' said the doctor, 'kindly tell me what you wish me to do? Yours is a very singular story, and I have the very firmest

faith in it. But, my dear madam, the last time you left here you carried away a large number of his papers; and I would greatly prefer the presence of a notary before you go through his effects.'

'My dear doctor, you are stronger than I am, and I am not likely to *steal* any of his papers. Let us, by all means, have a notary, and I will go through them with you.'

'I shall be most happy to do so,' said the doctor, 'but you spoke just now of the woman Carlina. She has left this place.'

'Yes?'

'Yes; she has gone, I believe, to England, but I am not sure. However, if you will wait, I will send for the notary, and do as you desire.'

'May my mother be present, doctor?'

'Surely, Mrs. Arnaud, I will agree to that.'

The notary came, the effects were examined, but the paper was not to be discovered.

The poor man had brought away at least seven thousand pounds with him, that was found perfectly secure; but there was no trace whatever of the important document. The notary got a little impatient.

'Mrs. Arnaud,' he said, in perfectly good English, 'you, under pretence of being the dead man's sister, carried off to England his papers. That is a matter which you cannot deny.'

This was turning the tables with a vengeance.

'I took away the papers which he gave me,' said Mary Arnaud.

'My dear madam, that is no answer.'

'I don't know anything about answers,' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'I wish I had never come here.'

'That is likely, madam. You confess to having carried off his papers under false pretences. I am afraid I must ask the Mayor to put you under arrest. It seems rather a black case. It was a terribly black case,' the notary continued, in the Continental fashion of believing every one to be guilty until they were found innocent, unlike our similar procedure, which is radically different. 'You took away the dead man's papers, and have, it seems, returned for one which you missed. What was that paper?'

'Am I under examination?' said Mary Arnaud.

'No.'

'Then why do you assume all this against me? What right have you to do it? Be quiet until I send for my mother.'

Madame Mantalent was not long in coming. The Frenchwoman faced the Prussian as the Ophiophagus Elaps faces the Cobra. She, at all events, had never forgiven the advance of Blucher from Ligny to Waterloo, though she had long ago forgiven the English, Scotch, and Irish for standing in

that rain of iron for so many hours, and, in fact, considered Wellington only inferior to Buonaparte and Moreau. She was nearly old enough to have heard of Rossbach. She faced the Prussian notary with what may be called, without disrespect, an evil eye.

'What have you been saying to my daughter?' she asked, stamping her stick upon the ground.

'I have been saying, madame, that your daughter has removed Mr. Drummond's papers before his death, and has carried them to England. She has represented herself as his sister, and now confesses that she is nothing of the kind; that, under the Prussian law, is what you call in England felony. We cannot disguise from ourselves, madame, that she has returned to seek a paper which she missed, and we must detain her.'

'Did the dead man,' said Madame Mantalent, slowly, 'give her a receipt in full, witnessed by the doctor, for all the papers she took?'

'He certainly did,' said the doctor.

'We can produce the document,' said Madame Mantalent, 'but that is of very little matter. We *have* come back to recover a paper which belonged to the dead man, and which was certainly in his possession, as we know. Now, I want to ask you two scoundrels, you, Prussian notary, and you quack English doctor, what you have done with it

between you? I have more money than you two put together, and I will hunt you from one court to another. What have you done with it? You have not a leg to stand on. If my daughter was dishonest, would she have come back here to seek it? You have the paper between you, and if there was law in Prussia, I would make you give it up; but I will take uncommonly good care, doctor, to denounce you in England as a swindler.'

To say that Mrs. Arnaud was taken by surprise by her mother's flank movement is to say nothing. She had had so many surprises in this world that another was nothing to her. I am sorry to say about my very dear friend that she was pretending to weep behind her handkerchief, while she was choking with laughter, about the way in which her mother had turned the enemies' flank. She thought that the conclusion was the best.

'Gentlemen,' she said, rising and whisking her handkerchief. 'I am an old woman, near my grave. You have been tempted, doubtless, as many of us have, and you have yielded to temptation. I am a woman of business. You have the document I require here; I am rich, and I will give you a thousand sovereigns for it.'

And so she marched off to bed. The Englishman and the Prussian were no match for the old Frenchwoman. She had entirely beaten them, and

the doctor only desired to get her out of the house. There was no more talk of arrest; and when Mrs. Arnaud was putting her mother to bed, she mildly remonstrated with her.

'Mamma, you went too far.'

'You can never do that, my dear. I have played the low insular game of cribbage, and if you peg too far you may be detected and have to go back; but you will find, if you raise a sufficient argument, that your adversary in the next hand will not play well, and so you gain in any way.'

'But, mamma, were you right in saying those dreadful things about them?'

'My dear, they have not got the paper. Besides, even if they had, I offered them a thousand pounds for it, and they neither of them had presence of mind to refuse. That in England would be twenty years' penal servitude for either of them. Their tongues are tied.

'I wonder where the paper is,' said Mrs. Arnaud.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ONE SMALL FLAME GOES OUT.

It is very painful for the present writer to speak of the fearful disasters which came down so suddenly on the most venerated head of Lord Festiniog. Of course, our moral readers will quarrel with us at once when we say that he was a good old fellow, and that there really was no harm in him. He wanted to possess the property, and he believed in the validity of a certain document, which was not worth the paper on which it was written.

He let the two women, Mrs. Arnaud and Madame Mantalent, go to St. Goar to see if they could recover it. That was extremely wrong. They made an utter failure, which served him right. Still, Nemesis punished him somewhat heavily; for the woman, Carlina, had taken the paper straight to Lord Rhyader, and before she had been with him half an hour, George Drummond had arrived from Marseilles.

Lord Rhyader—who was now in the House—

was among pyramids of blue-books. He was thinking about making a speech, which has never been made. He heard a rustle in his study, and swore under his breath. Seeing that it was only his valet, he kept his temper.

'An Italian woman wishes to see your lordship,' said the valet.

'Am I an organ-grinder man?' said Lord Rhyader, 'that you should talk to me of an Italian woman?'

'You had better see her, my lord. It is that woman, Carlina.'

'Oh, I see. Send her up.'

Up came the Italian woman, and went straight to the point. She told Lord Rhyader very much which he had guessed, but a great deal which he did not know. She pointed out that she had a certain paper in her possession, which deprived the Festiniog part of the family of all their inheritance, and gave it to the Killigrews.

'May I see this paper?' he asked Carlina.

'No, my lord, it is in safer hands than mine.'

'You will give me time for deliberation, will you not?' said Lord Rhyader.

'I can only give you two hours,' said Carlina.

'I am all abroad over this matter,' said Lord Rhyader. 'I wish for advice. Could you possibly

meet me in two hours from this time, at No. 17 Hartley Street, Cavendish Square?'

Carlina hesitated, and looked at him. At last she said,—

'The English word is to be trusted. Will you swear to me, from being assassinated in that horrible house?'

Lord Rhyader gave his word to her. He said,—'I do not quite understand what you mean. No. 17 is pleasantly remembered by some of our family.'

'Your family are idiots,' she replied. 'Mrs. Arnaud, Madame Mantalent, Clotilde, and Heloise, are all Jesuits. Every one.'

'Well, my dear madam,' said Lord Rhyader, 'I will see you safe through your visit. Do not fail us.'

Lord Rhyader went at once to No. 17; the door was opened by Rachel; he was shown into the back parlour by Clotilde; and there sat, looking extremely tired and worn, George Drummond.

'Cousin George,' said Lord Rhyader, 'we all thought that you were drowned. We are very glad to find that it is not the case.'

'Cousin Rhyader,' said George Arnaud, 'it would have been better had I been drowned. I risked my life to save your boy. That is acknowledged?'

'Most fully, my dear Arnaud. God knows how fully.'

'Have I omitted any duty to your family?'

'Certainly none.'

'Suppose I were to tell you that there was no family. That we were beggars and impostors, what would you do?'

'I suppose that the woman, Carlina, has been with you?' said Lord Rhyader.

'Well, she has.'

'What do you propose to do, George Arnaud?' said Lord Rhyader.

'Give up everything,' said George Arnaud. 'Put the thing in Chancery, and let the estate pay, if you like.'

'Quite my idea,' said Lord Rhyader. 'But my father, Lord Festiniog. What would he do?'

It was rather an alarming question, because Lord Festiniog happened to walk into the room at that moment; looking exactly as if nothing was the matter, whereas he perfectly well knew that a very great deal was the matter. He had heard of George Arnaud's arrival, and was very glad, apparently, to see him. He had something on his mind: something, which put everything else in the shade. The arrival of George Arnaud was nothing now.

'I am glad that you are here, sir,' said Lord Rhyader; 'there is this woman, Carlina, who seems to have a great deal more to do with our family than I like, coming; she, it seems, holds some deed, which utterly disinherits and ruins us. Do you know anything about it?'

'Yes, I do,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I encouraged Mary Arnaud and Madame Mantalent to go to Germany, and try to secure it.'

'Is the document of any value?' asked Lord Rhyader.

'Of the greatest value,' said Lord Festiniog. 'We are beggars without it. We must make terms with the woman, Rhyader, or we shall be in the workhouse.'

'Neither I, nor George Arnaud, will do anything of the kind, sir. What relations have you made over this matter with Mrs. Arnaud and Madame Mantalent?'

'They were very brief, Rhyader. I think that I was not to blame very much. You should not be angry with me, just now.'

Lord Festiniog looked peculiarly troubled.

'You have,' said Lord Rhyader, 'entered into some compact with those two women about this Italian woman's paper. I and George Arnaud will have nothing to do with it. I, for my part, curse it.'

'Rhyader!' said Lord Festiniog, drawing himself up, 'do not curse your father's actions.'

'Why not, my lord?' said Lord Rhyader.

'Because you have no son left to curse your own. Barri died two hours ago.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TEMPTED ONCE TOO OFTEN.

'So Barri is dead!' said George Arnaud. 'I am most deeply sorry. I risked my life for him, and I could do no more. Lord Rhyader, you will bear me out in that fact.'

'Certainly. Barri dead? Yes! Well! God afflicts us sorely. Why, heaven help us, all the property would have gone to you, George Arnaud.'

'My dear Rhyader,' said Lord Festiniog, 'have you no other word to say when I tell you of the death of your son?'

'Everything which is affectionate I will say or write down. But I fancy the boy is better out of the world than in it.'

'Why?' said Lord Festiniog.

'Because he would be a beggar like the rest of us. He will be an angel in heaven.'

'Do you mean to give up everything, sir?' said Lord Festiniog, turning on George Arnaud savagely. 'I ask you: do you mean to do it and

retire once more into the original beggary from which you were rescued? Are you going to follow that ass, noodle, and prig of a son of mine in his curses, or are you going to behave like a man?'

'Let us come outside and talk, Lord Festiniog,' said George Arnaud.

They went out into the shop, among the dresses, and Lord Festiniog said,—

'My dear George Arnaud: I want to put a matter before you, and to put it without temper. I lost my temper just now, with my son, and I apologize for it. There is no doubt that your putative father was a great scoundrel, and that long after he was married he behaved very badly to your mother. Now, he got possession of a certain document, which would disinherit the whole of us, and the woman Carlina has it in her possession. Under these circumstances, I ask you, as a moral young man, what is to be done?'

George Arnaud, that most moral, excellent, and admirable young man, sat down in a chair in the shop at No. 17, and thought. At last he spoke.

'My lord,' he said, 'I have thought through the matter once more' (had he?) 'and I think that on the whole I would buy the document from the woman. I think that it would be best.'

Lord Festiniog spoke again.

'George Arnaud,' he said, 'do you see this?

Neither Rhyader nor myself will ever marry again. You will take my title and my estates without any dispute. It is in your interest that the paper should be got hold of and destroyed, as much as any one else's. Do you agree to its being done?'

'Rhyader might object.'

'Fudge,' said Lord Festiniog. 'I am not going to consult that noodle. You have got to decide whether you will be a beggar or a peer. I know that the woman is coming here directly. Say the word.'

'Why does not your lordship say it yourself?'

'Because it is a matter of entire indifference to me, personally. There will be a grand lawsuit, but plenty of money to keep me comfortably. As for Rhyader, I don't care for him very much. I have liked you better lately. Come, decide.'

'I would buy the paper of the woman, then, my lord.'

Lord Festiniog was standing behind George Arnaud, and so he could not see the look of intense scorn which was on the lord's face. He said,—

'It is felony, mind you, and you are concerned in it with me.'

George Arnaud said, quietly, 'I am in good company, my lord.'

'Then we will both go to hell together,' said Lord Festiniog.

The speech startled George Arnaud for a moment. He had meant to be very pure over the matter, but he had changed his mind. With Lord Rhyader he was trying to do his duty; with Lord Festiniog he was prevented from doing it. Lord Festiniog—he, George Arnaud, was the future Lord Festiniog; and from the contemplation of that fact his morality suffered.

I do not wish to dwell on what happened almost immediately at No. 17. The Italian woman, Carlina, came with her paper, accompanied by her relatives, probably either bandits or organ-grinders: George Arnaud declares that they were the latter. She gave Lord Festiniog the paper, which was not worth a shilling, and he paid her one thousand pounds in bank-notes. When she was gone, George Arnaud and he solemnly burnt that paper, and Lord Rhyader politely declined to know anything about the matter.

George Arnaud had been tempted once too often, and had fallen.

CHAPTER XL.

CONCLUSION.

I AM afraid that our story has been very immoral, and that every character in it, with the exception of the two young French ladies, Heloise and Clotilde, and of Lady Rhyader, ought to be picking oakum in Coldbath Fields. The writer has not a single word to say for any one of them, except that he likes them, as some people have been known to love extremely naughty children of either sex.

It is possible, however, that the reader may like to hear how the judgments of Nemesis overtook the gang of miscreants of which the writer has attempted to give a sketch. Although they were all engaged more or less in a misprision of felony, no remarkable judgments overtook them.

Madame Mantalent's rheumatism and obstinacy caused her to remain in Paris during the siege, where it has been affirmed that she ate her cat. That is totally untrue, because her cat is at No. 17 to this

day. What became of Mrs. Arnaud's pet colly dog, who certainly went into Paris, and equally certainly never came out again, we don't know. Since the Commune business, Madame Mantalent has settled in England permanently, as she intended to do several times before. Her conversation is charming, but she objects to any mention of the siege of Paris, unless she has all the conversation to herself.

She says that the behaviour of the Germans was extremely odious, but that all the Germans in creation were less detestable than Madame Virmesch, who induced her husband to ruin trade in Paris. She says that M. Virmesch was a '*bon garçon*' ruined by his wife. The Communists, she adds, had no taste for colour. The red, which they so abundantly used, was extremely raw, and by no means of the right tint. When madame is examined on the subject of French politics she is rather puzzling. She is not Cæsarist, because she says that the lady of Chiselhurst had never any taste in ribands, though she was in other ways a most admirable lady. 'What,' says Madame Mantalent, 'are you to do with a great lady who wears round her neck English eau de Nile from Coventry?' In fact, Madame Mantalent has quarrelled with the Imperial family on the subject of dress. She has also had a few very decisive words with

Madame MacMahon on the same subject; and Madame MacMahon has had to yield, at least so it is said. Mrs. Grant's head-dress was reported to her correspondent as being objectionable. She at once wrote to the President of the United States. Nay, more: our own Queen had on one day a bonnet, which, as Madame Mantalent thought, did not suit her; and Madame Mantalent at once wrote off to say that she would be glad of an interview. It was not granted, and No. 17 remained without Royal patronage.

But No. 17 flourished strangely. There was a curious atmosphere about it which attracted certain people. There was no one ever came there who was not in some sense a sinner, but then who is blameless? The people who came there were people who were tired of the world, and who were waiting for death. They had all of them more money than they knew how to dispose of; but they were tired of the world, and wished to be out of it. Lord Rhyader expressed this opinion first, and Lord Festiniog rebuked him, but Mary Arnaud and Madame Mantalent backed him up.

'Why need we live?' said Mrs. Arnaud. 'I have lived three lives, and I am tired.'

'Why were we ever born?' said Madame Mantalent. 'For art? Nonsense. For politics? Once more nonsense. To reproduce ourselves? Again

nonsense. There is my daughter, is she in any way worthy of me? Yes, my darling, you are worth fifty of me. Don't mind the old woman. How much happier we shall be when we are dead!'

Lord Festiniog was not certain about that. He considered that we did not know enough about the next world.

George Arnaud backed Lord Festiniog; and the conversation changed, although from time to time it was renewed for some few years.

Lord Rhyader was, singularly enough, the first to go. He took to his bed, stayed there, and died. His last words were very solemnly spoken. 'Giraldus Cambrensis,' he said, 'was the founder of our house. He was a Churchman, and I want no scandal in the family, but I would sooner have the bar sinister on our arms than deny the fact. He was head of the Barris. As for the Irish Barrys—there—' Those were his lordship's last words.

It was some time before Madame Mantalent went that Clotilde took the veil. D'Arcy had come into a great deal of money, and he and Heloise were spinning about in the world like a couple of teetotums. Madame Mantalent, as D'Arcy and his wife averred, had asked Lord Festiniog to marry her, and his lordship had declined, though with the greatest politeness, urging

age, which madame said was of no consequence at all.

However, they were not married, and Madame Mantalent died. In reality she was killed by her rheumatism, but she declared that her death-blow came from seeing a great lady in blue silk with rubies. 'Whatever you may say of the Buonapartists, they would never have done *that*.' And so she closed her eyes, and never opened them any more. We fancy, after all, that she died in the Buonapartist faith; and in the end only a very high Catholic. There are many worse old women in the world than Madame Mantalent, when all is said and done, though the present writer would much rather be her biographer than her spiritual director.

We were in Westminster Hall a few days ago, when we saw a woman in deep mourning talking to a very tall young man. Both of them had their backs towards us, but I was perfectly certain that there were not three women in England who could carry themselves in the way of the lady in mourning. We approached, and they turned. We saw before us Mrs. Arnaud and a young gentleman, tall, gaunt, and melancholy, whom we did not recognize,—a man with a large beard, ill trimmed with a bronzed face,—a man who frowned at you, but did not scowl.

'My dear Sir,' said Mrs. Arnaud, 'I want to get

into the House of Commons, can you tell me any one who would help me? My son says that it is difficult to-night; let me introduce you. My son, Lord Festiniog.'

'Lord Festiniog?' I said. 'You don't mean to say that the dear old man is dead? I have been in Scotland, and have never heard of it.'

We went into a recess between the Hall and the lobby of the House of Commons, and she told us of it. The old fellow had died in his chair one morning, and his last words had been,—'Divine Providence is mysterious, when it permits the increase of the human race. What does it all mean? Merely misery, sorrow, and sin. Now I am going to be happy.'

Lord Festiniog, whilome George Drummond, came up, took his mother's arm, and led her away. 'You will make an excellent peer,' thought we, 'but I liked the dear old fellow better than I shall ever like you.'

THE END.

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